

Diamonds in the Deep, Gold in Your Eyes

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/27059488) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/27059488>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Video Blogging RPF , Minecraft (Video Game)
Relationship:	Clay Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream & GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)
Character:	GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , Jschlatt (Video Blogging RPF) , TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Toby Smith Tubbo , Wilbur Soot , Eret (Video Blogging RPF) , Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Darryl Noveschosch , Zak Ahmed , Patches
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - The Little Mermaid Fusion , Little Mermaid Elements , Fairy Tale Retellings , The Little Mermaid but make it Minecraft , Colorblind GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Mermaid GeorgeNotFound , Schlatt is Ursula because duh , Fluff and Angst , Flirting , Family Dynamics , Family Feels , Villain J Schlatt , Near Death Experiences , Minor Violence , Blood and Injury , GeorgeNotFound-centric (Video Blogging RPF) , Romance , Action/Adventure , sapnap flirts shamelessly as per usual , Patches POG , George is awkward , but we love him anyway , Alternate Universe - Mermaids
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-10-17 Completed: 2020-11-26 Chapters: 8/8 Words: 36118

Diamonds in the Deep, Gold in Your Eyes

by [EvenMadderHatter](#)

Summary

Milky white eyes stared him down, boring into him with such intensity that George felt them on him like cold hands.

"Now there's the matter of price-"

"I- I don't have anything-"

"Oh, I don't want anything monetary, Prince! I only require a small payment, the barest of minimum for a man like me." Schlatt paused before his gleaming gaze found George's face. "My only ask of you is that you give me... your sight."

...

AKA the DreamNotFound Little Mermaid AU that absolutely no one asked for <3

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Under the Sea

Chapter Summary

The masked man gripped the other's arms securely, but as the tide swept back once more, George knew what was about to happen.

"Watch out!" He screamed before he could stop himself, and the masked man snapped his face to George's.

Then, the wave hit the boat and he was slammed overboard.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"George!"

Flipping a wave of bubbles into his friend's worried face, George giggled before shooting through the water like an arrow, his tail moving powerfully behind him.

"George, I'm serious! We're going to be late, you muffin-head!"

"You're too serious, Bad, we'll be fine," George dismissed the words, flicking his tail once, twice, three times, propelling himself towards the murky shadow of the shipwreck lying straight ahead.

His satchel, hung over his shoulder securely, was light at his side, waiting to be filled with whatever goods the promising ruins held.

Like some fallen beast, it lay on its side in the midst of the darkened waters. A gaping, jagged hole opened up the side of the rotting wood and George let it swallow him whole as he swam through.

Bad, muttering nervously, followed him seconds later, his black tail gleaming like smooth obsidian in the dim light.

The cold of the waters bit through George's bare arms and he repressed a shiver. The sun's strong rays barely slipped through the water down here. It was much too far deep for the light to glitter down as it did in the Capital. George knew he should be frightened or at the very least more

cautious, as Bad was, but he couldn't help the budding excitement that flourished in his chest. This was what his heart sung for and what his soul yearned for. Adventure.

Slipping through a narrow hole, George twisted his way through to an open room. Abruptly, a flash of pain struck him and he yelped, dragging his tail towards him instinctively. A few of his scales winked at him as they fell to the ground, thin wisps of blood escaping the scrape. His tail had been caught on the sharp wood of the hole. With a hiss, he delicately touched the wound.

"George?" Came Bad's hurried call, pitched up in alarm.

"I'm fine, Bad! Just a scratch," He murmured, scraping the fallen blue scales underneath the decaying remains of a cabinet. His thin, petal-like fins moved to cover the blemish as his friend came shooting through the door.

Bad, carrying a hurt look as if he had been the one injured, immediately checked George over, biting his lips between his fanged teeth.

Bad had been George's best friend since he was very young. His parents were friends with George's father, the King, and they had struck up a quick friendship upon their first meeting. Unfortunately, George reflected upon discontentedly, they hadn't been seeing much of each other in the recent weeks as George's eldest brother, Wilbur, was soon to be appointed the official title of Crown Prince and George's schedule was rapidly filled with princely duties. He had just barely managed to escape from his room (which was beginning to feel more like a prison cell) at the castle and had roped Bad into exploring the shipwreck he had stumbled upon on one of the weeks prior. No one at the castle knew he was gone, yet, and if George had his way, they'd never find out.

"Bad, Bad, leave it, I'm fine! Let's just explore this area and get back to Wilbur's thing before Dad finds out I left."

Bad frowned but moved back. George grinned in triumph as he tugged on Bad's arm, leading him to the back of the compartment.

"There!" George exclaimed, a brilliant smile flashing across his face as he pointed towards his find.

Hidden away in the back corner of the ship, upturned and wedged against the wall, was a rusted chest. Together with Bad, he hauled it upright before snapping the rusted lock off with a quick

twist of his hand.

Bad snorted and George turned to him in curiosity as his friend crossed his arms. "Do I even want to know how many times you've done this by yourself?"

George grinned at that before letting out a teasing laugh. "I don't think so, Bad."

"I didn't think so either," The merman sighed before nudging George. "Let's find out what's in this thing, then."

Wasting not a second, George lifted the top of the chest, heaving it open. He let out a pleased gasp at the contents and immediately began rummaging through them.

"Look, Bad, look!" He squealed, holding up a green orb. It was gelatinous and murky, and George had the faint idea that it held a lot more power than what was imaginable. Concentrating on the orb, he could see faint sheets of purple light running over the surface, so thin they could be chalked up to his imagination.

"Gross, George, put it back." Bad crinkled his nose at the object and George scoffed as if the remark had hurt.

He tucked it into his satchel and shot a glare at his friend for good measure. Rifling through the rest of the chest, he was disappointed to find nothing but small nuggets of gold and rusted chunks of iron. "Useless," He murmured with a sigh and Bad let out a relieved breath.

"Alright, we can go now right?"

George rolled his eyes but relented. How much time had passed anyway? Surely Wilbur's ceremony had yet to start... right?

Feeling a spark of panic light in his stomach, George secured his satchel over his shoulder and tugged Bad along with him, leading his friend out of the decayed ship. They swam quickly and silently, powerful flicks of their tails guiding them to the warmer currents of the ocean. Branches of colorful coral and clouds of tropical fish-filled the sandy floors.

When the schools of fish shot away, hiding within their pockets of coral, George didn't give them a second glance. Neither of the two mentioned the slight vibrations in the water, signifying something large moving close by. Neither one of them noticed the grey masses gliding through the water either until they were right on top of them.

"George," Bad hissed and George looked up sharply. Bad's face was pale and his eyes were blown wide with shiny fear. He jerked his head to the right and George sucked in a breath.

Sharks.

How- George let out a bright curse as he glanced down at his tail. The scratch was wider than he thought, now fully visible in the light of the shallow waters. Angry and red and more importantly, bleeding, it cut through his lower tail. The blood had attracted the worst of the ocean shallows.

Suddenly, the clashing of teeth snapping together sounded out and George shoved Bad away, shooting off in the opposite direction just as a shark slashed through the space he left.

"Split up!" George cried and Bad hesitated for a second before nodding. The red scales smattering his dark fins flashed as he darted through the water, evading the sharks with his sharp movements.

Gulping, George did the same.

How could he have been so careless? Perhaps it was the frozen currents that were coming in - the calling card of a terrible storm brewing nearby. Maybe it was the prospect of freedom, of adventure that had been so impossibly alluring to him. Damn it. Whatever it was, it may have just screwed him.

Something brushed dangerously at his long fins and George bit back an alarmed scream, pulling his tail in before forcing himself to swim harder, faster.

The towering form of the royal castles came into view in the distance, beguiling in the way that they twinkled and shined, beckoning him forward. George wasn't sure if he could make it that far.

Sparing a glance back at the monstrous shark that followed him, maw gaping wide, George cursed. He had seen those powerful fins and the huge tail and instantly knew he would never be able to outswim it. There was only one way he'd make it out of this.

George shot upwards, swinging his heavy satchel over his shoulders. Gripping the worn leather, he brought the bag down on the beast's head, feeling its teeth grazing over his fins. The bag slammed down on the Shark, hitting it right between its beady, black eyes. It let out a grisly wail before retracting its humongous head - and with it, those impossibly keen teeth. Slinking away along the ocean floor, the shark disappeared into a forest of thick, twisting kelp.

An incredulous laugh escaped George's throat before he could stop it. It was a harsh, colorful noise that burst out from deep within his trembling form.

A great trumpeting sounded out from close by, and George jolted, his breath escaping him in a rush. The music continued and a great panic took over his mind as he realized what it was.

The announcement of the King.

He was late to Wilbur's ceremony.

George clutched his satchel close to his chest as he rushed through the waters, praying through clenched teeth that he'd see Bad, safe and sound within the Capital walls.

...

George slunk into his seat, trying to ignore the positively searing gaze of his father. King Philza was sat in his chariot, graciously smiling at his adoring citizens. Yet somehow, when George entered the palace as cautiously as he could, the King took notice immediately, directing an all-too-familiar, "we will talk about this later" look at his youngest son.

Seeing Bad in the crowd alleviated some of George's dread, though, as he flashed a quick thumbs up at his friend, who glared back at him. Bad wouldn't stay aggravated for long, George knew. He'd bribe him later with some goodies from his Grotto.

George's Grotto was a place solely for him. No one else but Bad knew of his secret haven, and even then, George had only taken Bad to the cavern once. The Grotto was a large underwater cave

that opened up to the bare sky, and it housed all of his treasures. George had painstakingly carved out a spiral of neat shelves into the limestone walls of the cave, all to store his wonderful treasures. Bars of gold, old maps stored in glass frames, multiple blue hearts of the sea, whatever he had managed to scavenge was kept in the Grotto. It was the most special place for George, but he couldn't risk telling anyone. If his father found out he went out alone to explore human ruins and wreckages, George would be kept in the castle forever, he was sure of it.

The loud trumpeting of the royal musicians jolted George back into the present and he focused on the form of his eldest brother as he stepped down to join his father at the bottom of the courtyard.

Wilbur kneeled in front of their father, a handsome smile on his face. His emerald green tail waved behind him nervously, flicking his shimmering fins back and forth. King Philza smiled down at his eldest son graciously, exchanging a few words with him. George's mouth went dry as Wilbur's eyes flicked to his and he gave his father an understanding nod. He knew he didn't want to know what that meant.

With that, King Philza extended his hand to Wilbur and they stood together, pride bursting from the King's wide grin.

George, ignoring his brother Eret's curious glance, slipped out of the room, which descended into lively music and flashes of multicolored scales as merman and mermaid danced together.

Making his way down to where Bad stood awkwardly by himself on the floor, George opened his mouth to call out to his friend.

Before he could grab his attention, Bad was approached by a dashing merman with darker skin and big, bright eyes. He recognized the figure as Skeppy, one of his dad's soldiers. Skeppy's turquoise tail swished happily as the two exchanged conversation and Bad laughed. The merman seemed pleased at Bad's amusement and gestured towards the crowd of twirling merfolk. George grinned as a faint blush overtook his friend's cheeks and watched as he and Bad headed out to dance.

He whistled sharply and Bad turned, his searching gaze landing on George with confusion and then wide clarity. George gestured out behind him and mimed himself swimming away before flashing his friend a cheeky grin and pointed at the turquoise-tailed merman, miming kissing. Bad shot him a disgusted glare through his quickly reddening cheeks, but an earnest look took over his face as he mouthed "be careful".

George nodded and saluted his friend briefly. Then, he turned and headed towards his Grotto, ready to drop off his new treasure.

...

Keeping a careful eye out for sharks, George made his way through the bright blue water towards the rocky caves that made up his Grotto.

A large stone block concealed the entrance to the warm cavern, and George heaved it to the side in a practiced shove.

As always, his breath left him as he gazed upon his beloved treasures. Perfectly carved emeralds, old lecterns holding onto decaying novels, a sleek iron sword shimmering purple with unknown power - they made up a fraction of the grotto's contents. Bits of gold caught the light streaming in from the open roof of the cave, reflecting the colors of the rainbow around him.

If there was something George loved more than anything, it was the vibrancy of his world. Sure, the coral surrounding his home was beautiful, but nothing beat the sun's rays bouncing off sheets of gold, streaks of silver, spots of red, orange, blue, green.

However, before George could relish in the beauty of the treasures around him, the light filtering in from the sky disappeared. Frowning, George swam up to the surface, popping out of the water.

The sky growled down at him, warning him of its bad temper. Dark clouds, almost black in their intensity, swept through the sky and the harsh winds roiled the water. George shivered in the sudden cold, knowing that it would be mere minutes before the bad weather hit the Capital and ruined the party for everyone.

Choosing to swim back to the Capital as quickly as possible, George gripped the rocky cave wall, ready to push himself down into the darkening waters.

Then, he heard the yelling.

George paused, cocking his head as he listened carefully. For a second, as he listened to the whining wind, he thought he imagined the noise. Then, the shouts sounded out louder, getting

closer.

Curiosity was a gaping hole in his chest, aching to be sated, and George succumbed to the yearning.

Plunging down into the waters, he carefully exited his Grotto, throwing his bag behind a rocky section of the cave. He'd retrieve it later, he reasoned, after the storm had passed on through.

Swimming through the water, George's eyes bugged out of his head as he saw the massive shadow of some great beast swimming towards him. It outsized any shark or ocean creature he had ever seen. He had heard tales of enormous creatures called whales from Wilbur and Eret, but he knew they didn't come so early in the year.

Against his better judgment, George propelled himself upwards with his arms, tearing at the water around him.

He emerged from the depths, shaking his hair out of his eyes to see the beast in front of him.

Words escaped his thoughts as he took in the harrowing sight.

A ship - much like the very ones he had explored all his life - rocked precariously in the waters. Men with two fins - humans! George realized with a shock - clung desperately to the ropes hanging off the ship, many screaming as they were tossed to and fro, barely keeping away from the hungry waves.

George peered up at the ship and his eyes widened as he saw a cloaked figure scaling the ship's mast. What was he thinking? He would surely be tossed overboard by the raging winds, and George wasn't sure that humans were good swimmers.

The cloaked man stopped halfway up the mast, looping a long length of rope around the thick wood once, twice, before knotting it off quickly and securely. Coiling it around their arm, the figure tugged on it sharply before turning around, now facing George.

The human wore a strange white mask - one that covered his entire face. Through the heavy sheets of rain pouring down on him, George could barely make out a simple smiley face decorating the mask. Then, before he could make any further observations, the man leaped from the mast.

George let out a strangled cry at the absurdity of his actions, but it faded quickly into shocked admiration. The man swung from the rope, shooting past the sailors clinging to the ropes. With his free hand, he grabbed men and flung them overboard. With every pass that he made, more and more men were saved.

Until, George realized with wide eyes, there was only one man left.

The masked man kicked off of the mast, swinging down low to grab the remaining sailor. He missed by what looked like fractions and George found himself wincing.

The lone sailor, gripping white-knuckled onto the ship's fraying ropes, yelled something at the masked man, who seemingly ignored him, swinging back towards the man.

This time, they grabbed onto each other and swung back up onto the ship, shakily righting themselves. The saved man - a tall figure with scruffy dark hair held back by a white bandanna whipping wildly in the wind - laughed openly, turning to the masked man with an adrenaline-crazed grin.

The masked man gripped the other's arms securely, but as the tide swept back once more, George knew what was about to happen.

"Watch out!" He screamed before he could stop himself, and the masked man snapped his face to George's.

Then, the wave hit the boat and he was slammed overboard.

"Dream!" The black-haired man screamed, reaching out for the man.

But he was too late, and the masked man - Dream - was already flipping into the relentless waves, dragged down and thrashed around like a ragdoll.

And before he knew what he was doing, George was plunging down into the torrent, his hands searching the wild currents blindly for a billowing cloak and a strange, white mask.

Groaning as he felt nothing but the frozen water of the ocean, George pushed himself further down, forcing his eyes open for a sight of anything.

There. To his right.

A white glimmer.

An uncertain smile on a snowy surface, beckoning him forward.

George swam with speed he didn't know he possessed, cutting through the ocean like a blade forged from diamonds.

His fists closed around something heavy and George pulled with all his might, dragging the body as best he could as the currents tossed him around. He broke the water with a broken gasp, coughing wetly as his lungs burned for him to catch his breath.

Not daring to look at the limp weight in his hands, George gripped onto the damp cloak tighter, spotting a faint smear of land on the horizon.

His shoulders screamed at him and his breaths came out in tortured huffs, but George fought his way to the shallow sands. The smattering of rain pelting down was now a hazy, pitiful shower.

Shivering in the mist, George shoved the man onto the sand as best he could in his exhausted state. Feeling the strength seep out of him like a ship sinking in water, he slumped over the man - Dream, he recalled faintly - and coughed harshly.

The body under him shivered and George exhaled loudly. Okay, so not dead. That was a relief.

He looked down at the man and his eyes widened when he saw his bare face. The white smiley mask had long since been lost to the ocean's wrath, penance for his life, George thought numbly.

His eyes trailed over the man's face, over his strong jaw and freckled cheeks, the slope of his nose, and the light eyelashes that grazed his cheeks as they fluttered restlessly. He was breathtaking, George thought, his brain fizzling out. How unfair it was that such a gorgeous face was confined to

the land, so far from him.

The man groaned suddenly, seawater gurgling in his throat as he turned and hacked miserably on the sodden, grey sand. George jerked back, suddenly very aware of his predicament. He glanced back at his sapphire tail, peeking out of the water, and swore, pushing himself back into the water with a heavy crash. If his father found out he was with a human, he would never hear the end of it. King Philza would be *furious*.

Ever since he was a young boy, George had listened eagerly to the legends of man and mer. The details were hazy, but most could agree on the following version.

Once upon a time, man and mer had lived in harmony, exchanging knowledge and friendship like simple gifts. However, the humans had grown steadily greedy, and all too soon, fights had broken out. Knowing that the merfolk would never stand a chance against their bloodthirsty counterparts, the King of that time had sealed the borders of the sea. He summoned ruthless hurricanes and tidal waves, sinking the kingdom down to the bottom of the secluded sea all while keeping the humans away. All contact between man and merfolk would be terminated.

Many took this as a cautionary tale - a warning, to keep far, far away from the creatures that lived above them.

To George, these stories only sparked an insatiable curiosity.

George surfaced from the water, his winding cerulean tail hidden in the murky waves. The storm had stirred up sand from deep on the ocean floor, turning the water from a sparkling diamond to smoky darkness.

He heard a sharp intake of breath and froze. Looking up, he was met with the confused face of the man, now sat up and coherent. George froze under the intensity of his eyes, the heat of his stare.

"Who are-"

George turned and dove into the water, his heart ramming up against his ribcage furiously.

Idiot, you've been seen, a voice in his head scolded him as he ripped through the waters, thankful for the adrenaline thrumming through his exhausted body. *Idiot*, the voice muttered as his heart fluttered at the memory of the man's handsome face. *You liked it.*

Chapter End Notes

To all my friends who will inevitably read this and judge me: I have no excuses.

I have fallen down the black hole of simping for block men, it is true.

Join me or perish :)

Thanks to my best bud Clove for beta-ing this mess of indulgence. Thank you for also not judging my grammar. Shower her with love, she's the best!

Also: If you were wondering why George isn't colorblind, don't worry that's on purpose. And I also messed around with their ages because I wanted George to be the youngest prince, but they're all over 18.

Important note If any of the people mentioned in this fic express discomfort over being shipped or portrayed in the way they are, I will take down this work, no questions asked. Respecting them always comes first.

That's all for now- thanks for reading!! I'll try and update soon but it really depends on how badly school wants to witness my downfall :) Ly all <3

Poor Unfortunate Souls

Chapter Summary

You know the only way for you to find your solace is to become a human," Schlatt purred and George froze, his eyes wide.

Schlatt, content with George's reaction, backed off, heading deeper into the gloomy lair.

"How did you-" Shaking his head, George raised his voice at the retreating merman. "Can you do that?"

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George made it two feet into the castle grounds before he was tackled mid-air, strong arms squeezing all the air from his lungs in their grip.

"Wilbur!" The yelp escaped his lips before he could stop it and he awkwardly patted his brother's back. "Are- are you okay?"

George shrunk back as Wilbur retracted, his dark eyes narrowed with obvious anger.

"Do you know how worried we were? Eret and I have been out searching for you for hours!" George winced at that, his eyes flitting down to his shimmering fins. "You can't just disappear for hours upon end, George, *especially* not when there's a storm brewing. I thought you knew better." Wilbur remarked, his lips twisted and thin.

"Will, I'm sorry for worrying you but-"

"George!" A deep voice sounded out and he whirled around, his eyes landing on Eret. His brother zipped towards him in a flash of purple scales, gripping onto George's arms as Wilbur had. More concerningly, hovering behind Eret shadowed terribly, was King Philza.

Worse yet, Bad stood behind the King, wringing his hands so hard it must have hurt. His gaze glimmered with relief and deep, intense guilt.

"Bad?" George murmured in a daze, watching with narrowed eyes as his friend shrank back.

"I- oh muffins, George I'm so sorry - when you disappeared I didn't know what to do- and it was storming! I thought... I thought maybe you had gone to-" Bad cut himself off, his nervous gaze landing on the King.

George, swallowing the growing lump in his throat turned to his father, dread pooling in the pit of his stomach.

The King's frozen glare left him as Philza turned, swimming out towards the wide ocean.

"Dad?" George swam forward instinctively, his heart pounding at his temples relentlessly. Philza didn't respond and George felt as though he had been doused in ice. " *Dad* ! Where are you going?"

Familiar mounds of coral passed them in a blur as George struggled to keep up with the King of Merfolk. Wilbur and Eret followed close by, their brows pulled together in concern. Bad trailed behind them, barely visible past the swarms of bubbles George left in his wake.

"Dad, we should turn back - the storm is raging above," George spoke uncertainly, trying to keep his wavering voice steady.

Philza didn't respond, his dark eyes set on something in the distance. George followed the charged gaze and his heart plummeted into his stomach.

He was staring right at the entrance to the Grotto.

Any hope that it was a coincidence evaporated into a pure, hot panic as Philza angled his trident towards the concealed entrance. George could only gasp as a bolt of light erupted from the weapon, striking down the doorway.

"What are you *doing* ?" George screamed as Philza swam through the destruction, right into the Grotto.

He didn't dare look at his brothers as he swam after his father. The King's face was bright red,

incredulous and more importantly, fiercely angered. Trailing his eyes all over George's shelves, he let out something akin to a growl, and ice shot through George's veins.

"This is where you've been spending your time? This is what you've been doing? Skipping out on your duties, *disrespecting* your brothers - your own blood. All for what? This trash?"

George felt the air rush out of his lungs as Philza's eyes flashed with something dangerous, something carnal. He lifted his trident towards the shelves and something within George cracked.

"Stop! Please!" He begged, latching onto Philza's arm. Almost immediately, he was shrugged off roughly, barely caught by Wilbur's warm hands.

And before he could even cry out, an arc of pure power crashed through his shelves. Delicate glass bottles broke instantly, books were eviscerated, maps burned. George screamed, grabbing onto Philza's hand.

"No, *please!* Stop!"

With a mighty cry, Philza swept his trident through the dark water, sending spirals of destructive force careening through the small Grotto.

George sunk to the ground, unable to keep himself up any longer. His teeth clashed together and his hands trembled. It felt like Philza was snapping his heartstrings one by one with that terrible trident of his. Watching glass flecks tumble through the water, George felt bile rising in his throat. All of his work. Gone in seconds.

Faintly, as the light faded from the cave walls, he heard the deep rumbling of talking. The waters shivered as the King left, but George couldn't bring himself to lift his head.

"George," A soft, melodic voice - Wilbur's, he realized in a daze- prodded from behind him as someone's calloused hand swept beneath his eyes.

Oh. He was crying.

"Leave me alone."

The hands cupped his flushed cheeks gently and George heard Eret's dulcet tones wrap around him. "George, you know he didn't mean-"

" *Leave* ." He choked out, an anguished sob rising in his throat.

The fingers on his cheeks shook but they obeyed. George knew even without looking that his brothers were crushed. And Bad - George couldn't stop the bolt of fury running through him at the thought of his friend. Bad had betrayed his biggest secret to the King. He could never be forgiven.

"We- we'll see you at the castle, George." Wilbur's voice floated over to him, uncertain. Water brushed against George's flushed cheeks as his brothers and Bad left, sympathy pouring off of them in suffocating waves.

And he would see them at the castle again, George mourned, fury rising in an uncontrollable force within him. It ballooned in his chest, barely contained in its quivering vessel. Where else did he have to go, after all?

Alone, at last, George succumbed all too fast to the tears rushing out of his eyes. Shuddering and gasping as he sobbed, he clutched his shoulders, hunching in over himself.

A shard of glass tumbled to the ground in front of him and he sighed - a broken, stuttered sound. Destruction reigned true all around him, but despite himself and his knowledge of Philza's incredible power, George still felt a glimmer of hope as he delicately picked up a fragment of blue-stained glass.

Getting up, he searched his Grotto at a dizzying speed, scouring over the crumbling shelves and the fragments of disintegrating gems falling through the water like a flurry of rainbow tears. He was a mad man, denying the inevitable truth that faced him coldly.

There was nothing left.

The realization hit him bluntly like a slap to the face, and for a second, George was breathless.

George had lived in the castle all his life, having grown up with his brothers and father safely within the Capital walls. Amongst the bright coral reefs and the flurry of fun, he had always felt somewhat content with the knowledge that he would grow old in the kingdom. Now, all he wanted to do was leave and never return.

"Are you okay?"

George shot up, his eyes snapping to the exposed entrance to the crumbling cavern. Two lithe figures stood in the dim light, their eyes fixated on George.

The one who had spoken swum forward, his large eyes wide with concern. His companion - a young boy with blonde hair and shiny blue eyes- moved in front of him, knocking shoulders with the boy. Flickers of bright sparks ran down their winding tails, and George realized they were part eel.

"Yeah, big man, you look kind of..." He shook his head, a nervous smile overtaking his young face. "Well, let's not talk about that! Say, what's your name?"

Caught off guard, George crossed his arms defensively. "Uh- it's George but-"

The blonde went on, not giving George a second to speak. "Alright, George, do you want to do business with me?"

"Business?" George questioned, baffled by the boy's outgoing talk.

"Yes," The blonde grinned, wide and childish. "Business! You know what they call me out there in the big blue, don't ya?" At George's blank look he scoffed. "Tommy Trusty, idiot, they call me Tommy Trusty."

Frowning at Tommy's brashness, George muttered, "Uh, okay-"

"And my good friend here is Tubbo," Tommy gestured towards the other boy, who gave a little wave. "Now," He set his glimmering eyes on George with a curling smirk. "Why don't you tell us what's bothering you?"

Lifting a brow, George raised his hand and waved around at the demolished grotto. "I- well, can't you see?"

Tommy sucked in a breath through gritted teeth as he observed the damage. "Well, yeah, I guess we can. This is a right mess you have here, big man."

George scoffed, barely biting back a sarcastic "you think?"

"If you want," Tubbo spoke up hesitantly, peering through his drifting brown locks with nervous eyes. "We know someone who can help you."

Instantly distrustful, George murmured, "You don't even know me, how would you know what I want?"

"Trust me, if there's anyone who would know, it's *him* ." Something in Tommy's voice unsettled George. It took a second of examining his guarded cobalt eyes to realize - the boy was scared.

"I don't know if that's a good idea..."

Tubbo cocked his head to one side and fixed George with his large, shining eyes. "Please? It wouldn't hurt to try, right?" At Tubbo's plead, George faltered, properly examining the duo.

The two boys stood close together, Tommy's shoulders squared. Where the blonde was standoffish and cocky, his counterpart was softer, hiding his nerves behind wide smiles. If he had been in his right mind, George would have scoffed and left, heading back to the safety of the Capital walls. But those walls held cowards in their grasp. In that split second of anger, George had made his decision.

"When do we leave?"

Immediately, a smile stretched across Tommy's cheeks. Electricity ran down the sleek length of his tail as he clapped George on the shoulder, leaving tingles of warmth running down his back.

"Good man! We'll get you to our master right away. Do you, uh, need to grab anything before we

go?" Tommy gestured lamely at the space around them and George shook his head, feeling a painful twinge in his chest.

"Right..." Tommy cleared his throat. "We'll be waiting outside then. Come on," He jabbed at Tubbo with an elbow, and the two were gone in a flash.

George let out a heavy sigh, wondering what he had just gotten tangled up in. He had never seen Tubbo or Tommy around the Capital, which sparked a whole web of new questions. Not many merfolk chose to live outside the guarded walls of the city, and those who did were usually mixed up in the wrong crowds. George wondered what kind of person their master was if they chose to live in the ocean depths.

Swimming out to the entrance of the grotto, he took a final look back at the remains. As his gaze swept the glass-littered ground and the dusty water, he grimaced. Then, his eyes landed on a twisted length of leather, poking out from behind a rocky outcrop.

Eyes widening, George swam down and grabbed the strap, letting out a small cry as his satchel drifted into his arms. He had completely forgotten about the bag.

Throwing the flap open, he dug his hand in and victoriously pulled out the murky green orb he had found that morning with Bad.

His mood soured at the thought of his friend, but George shook the image of Bad out of his head. Nothing would ruin this monumental find.

Slipping the squishy orb back into the bag, he pulled it over his shoulder and hugged it briefly, feeling silly for a second for the child-like joy bursting out of him.

"Big man? You alright in there?" Tommy's loud call jolted him out of his revelry and George felt a rush of embarrassment.

"Coming!" He yelled before darting out of the destroyed grotto, leaving the dull cavern behind.

...

"Uh, Tommy are you sure about this?"

The cave opening in front of them was pitch-black and narrow, carved out of the side of a mountainous rock face. The ocean floor was littered with bones protruding from the grey sand and he couldn't spot a single fish flitting about. The entire place screamed of unnatural forces.

"A hundred percent, big man. He's waiting right inside." Tommy gestured out at the cave but made no move to enter.

"You're not gonna... lead the way?"

The boy blinked, taken back for a second before that confident smile found its way back on his lips. "Of course, of course." He spared a quick glance back at Tubbo, one that held a lot more meaning than what George could garner.

The cave was submerged fully in the dark water, and all too soon George couldn't see where he was going. The sharp juts of the rock walls scraped against his skin like shark teeth and he shrunk in on himself, following the faint sparks of electricity Tommy let out.

Somehow, the temperature dropped even further until George was sure he wouldn't make it to the end. Then, the cave opened up into a large cavern, lit dimly by a massive opalescent conch shell.

Tommy stopped short, his wary eyes flickering around the expansive space, searching for something. Or rather... someone.

"Well, well, well, what have you brought me today, boys?" A booming voice echoed through the cave, seemingly coming from all directions. George held back a gasp as a long shadow streaked across the far wall, traveling across the floor until a dark mass stood in front of him.

"H-hey, Schlatt. We found him out near the Shallows. He- George said he-"

"George?" The figure swam forward and George gulped as his features came into view.

Milky white eyes stared him down, boring into him with such intensity that George felt them on him like cold hands. Two rams horns curved up from Schlatt's head, casting eerie shadows on the wall. Though intimidating, there was something almost sickly with the way he moved, tense and cautious as though an attack could come at any moment. His tail - an impressive coil of black scales - trailed behind him like a massive sea snake, ready to lash out.

"Y-yes," George stammered, kicking his tail out to get some distance between them.

"Boys, I told you to get me a good one but a *prince* ? You've exceeded all my expectations!" Schlatt laughed, a large sound, and George frowned as Tommy and Tubbo noticeably relaxed.

"How did you know I'm a prince?" George shot a glare at Tommy, who looked away quickly.

"I wasn't sure until you just confirmed it." Schlatt's eyes narrowed at him before a smirk grew on his face. "I see..." He murmured as he swam closer to George, boxing him in against the wall.

"What?" George demanded, feeling a spark of annoyance light in his chest as Schlatt's grin only grew wider.

"You know the only way for you to find your solace is to become a human," Schlatt purred and George froze, his eyes wide.

Schlatt, content with George's reaction, backed off, heading deeper into the gloomy lair.

"How did you-" Shaking his head, George raised his voice at the retreating merman. "Can you do that?" With powerful thrusts of his tail, George followed Schlatt as he swam through to a kelp-ridden section.

"Oh, why your highness, of course! That's what I do," Schlatt spoke with a smile evident in his deep tone. "I live for helping others, you see. Three days as a human, that's what I can grant you."

"Three?" George shook his head, though Schlatt's back was to him. "I'm sorry, I think you misunderstand me. I want a permanent solution."

Looking back at George, Schlatt grinned. "Why of course! But that part is your responsibility, Prince. Three days to find your man and receive 'true love's kiss', *that* is what will make the transformation permanent." Schlatt stopped in front of a large shelf, carved out of the same black rock around them. He searched clumsily through several shelves, knocking over glass bottles and strange powders.

Blood rushed to George's cheeks as he comprehended Schlatt's words. "'True love's kiss'?" He sputtered, ignoring Tommy's snickering behind him. "What kind of spell is this?"

Schlatt shrugged, turning away from the cabinet with a smile tugging at his lips. "Many old spells revolve around the concept of love, Prince. It isn't too hard to comprehend, is it?"

"Right but isn't that a little..."

"Awkward?" Schlatt supplied, gliding to the cauldron with something gripped in his fist. "Sure, but I'm sure you'll get around that. Now, have we got a deal?"

George, taken back by the man's haste, looked down worriedly. "If I become human, I can never return to the ocean again?" He clarified, biting his lip. "I won't be able to see Will, or Eret or-"

"Life is full of tough choices, young prince." Schlatt interrupted, reaching into the cauldron and tugging on a strand of silk-like string. "Besides, I see your pain, your suffering. They've done unspeakable things to you, have they not? Why would you ever want to stay?"

At that, George was silent. Painful images of his grotto, completely destroyed, flashed through his mind, haunting him.

"Now there's the matter of price-" Schlatt started, but George interrupted him as a bolt of panic ran through him.

"I- I don't have anything-"

"Oh, I don't want anything monetary, Prince! I only require a small payment, the barest of minimum for a man like me." Schlatt paused before his gleaming gaze found George's face. "My only ask of you is that you give me... your *sight*."

George's eyebrows lifted high, baffled by the response. "My sight? What do you mean you want my sight?"

"Oh, George - may I call you George?" Schlatt continued before he could respond. "George, you see here, I've been stuck in this unsightly cave for decades now! Centuries, even," Schlatt bemoaned, shoulders hunched over pitifully. "All because I can't see a thing! Someone did this to me a long, long time ago, you see, and I would be lying if I said I didn't hold a grudge. So I just need you to lend me your eyes for just a little while."

"You're-" George searched Schlatt's opalescent eyes, trying to spot any clarity in the white orbs. "Blind?" he finished lamely and a strained smile appeared on Schlatt's face, telling him all he needed to know.

"But-" Horrifying images of Schlatt gouging his eyes out flitted through his brain before he could stop them and he shivered.

Schlatt's laughter boomed in the open cave. "It won't be anything like that, George!" George couldn't ask how he knew of George's reaction before the man was talking once more. "It won't cost much for you, just the colors you see."

"You mean..."

Schlatt snapped his fingers impatiently, reaching his hands out wildly and grabbing ahold of George's shoulders. He steered him to the side of the cave and sat him down on a chair carved straight out of the floor. "Think a little faster, my boy, I implore you."

"You'll make me blind to color," George murmured, his brain a whirl.

"Precisely," Schlatt purred, heading back to his cauldron. Purple smoke crept across the floor of the cave, and George couldn't recall if it had been there from the very start. His mind was suddenly a haze of uncertainty and impulsivity.

"Alright. I'll do it."

"Wonderful!" Schlatt beamed. "I knew you had a brain in that head of yours. Now, George, and this is important! Keep your eyes focused on me, and good ol' J. Schlatt will take care of the rest." He approached George, murmuring under his breath in a language long forgotten to the sea.

George forced his eyes open, his hands a shaky mess at his sides. He could feel his hammering pulse in his head, banging on his brain with unrestrained fear.

"Tommy, Tubbo, take him up when it's done." Schlatt's voice was everywhere around him, drilling into his skull and bringing a fresh coat of tears to George's eyes.

White noise crashed in his ears like waves against eroding rock, stabbing through his thoughts like needles. George moaned as nausea swept over him. Just as it all became too much for him to bear, Schlatt's voice stopped and silence flooded the cave in a tidal wave.

George's vision blurred terribly and he let out a shuddering gasp as something crackled in the air. Six glowing orbs formed in the air around him, brilliant and shimmering. Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Violet. They shifted shades and vibrance and were filled with such captivating beauty that George was transfixed. They bobbed around him, sparkling in the aphotic waters like jellyfish.

Until a clawed hand swiped through them and they were caught, hidden away in the coils of a nautilus shell, grasped tightly in Schlatt's fist.

"Beautiful," Schlatt breathed shakily, lifting the shell - which hung off of a strand of string - and pulling it over his head. Instantly, George's world snapped into greyscale, and he groaned as the impact shook his head. Swaying dangerously on his perch, George barely felt the two pairs of hands curling around his arms, pulling him off of the chair. Sparks flew around him and his eyes struggled to keep up with the overwhelming scene.

"Remember the deal, George," Schlatt's voice drifted lazily into George's head, distorted.

"Right, right, true love's kiss and all that," He mumbled as Tommy and Tubbo dragged him away from the dim cave.

"You have three days."

George swallowed thickly and nodded, shutting his eyes fearfully as they drifted up, up, up, into the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this took so long to upload but its here yay! :D

Thank you to all who commented and gave kudos last chapter, motivation skyrocketed thanks to you all :)

Let me know what you think if you liked it <3

He's In Love

Chapter Summary

Dream sighed, but the sound was seemingly caught in his throat as he looked up, straight into George's eyes.

He stopped short, staring at George in shock. Moving slowly, as if in a daze, he reached a hand up to his face and pulled off his mask.

He was just as beautiful as George remembered him to be. Dare he say Dream looked even better when not on the brink of drowning?

"Hi," Dream murmured when he reached the rock and George felt his cheeks warm.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"You're a bit heavier than you look, big man!" Tommy wheezed from where he floated atop the water, his winding tail barely submerged in the grey water.

Tubbo giggled from where he lay on the sandy beach George flipped them off, crossing his arms over himself defensively while Tommy made a series of offended squawks.

Returning from where he had been scavenging on the shore, Tubbo handed him a wad of white cloth- the torn remains of a ship mast George realized - and looked up at him expectantly.

"You want me to wear *this* ?" George exclaimed incredulously and Tubbo flashed him an apologetic smile. Tommy laughed but shut up as George shot daggers at him. Tubbo, seemingly oblivious to the two - or maybe just apathetic, wound the fabric around him.

George was sat in the splashing cerulean waves- or, at least that's the shade he assumed the waves were. Everything was plunged into greys and faint blues, pale imitations of the vibrant colors he saw before. His legs stretched out in the water before him, his skin lacking the red tones of warmth he so easily overlooked when he could see color. Now, he thought petulantly, he looked dead.

Tommy flicked his tail and snaked through the water to them, begrudgingly coming to help with a

strand of thickly twined rope in his hands. The giggling laughter of the two boys took George's mind off of his predicament as they tied and yanked on the cloth. Despite George hissing at them to stop fooling around, the boys never lost their mischievous grins.

As he pulled the makeshift robes up, George looked out at the grey sea, his mood suddenly downtrodden. Everything was the same morose color, leeching away his energy. *Could he live like this?* He wondered, his eyes traveling to Tubbo and Tommy, who were equally colorless. As Tommy made another snide remark and Tubbo laughed loudly, George paused in his wallowing. Though their faces were pale, their smiles were bright and their eyes twinkled with clear mirth. For a second, he wondered if beauty really lied in colors or not.

George was jolted out of his thoughts by a series of jaunty notes that floated through the air, forming a melodious tune. Someone nearby was whistling, George realized. Worse yet, they were coming straight towards them.

The three boys froze and Tommy hastened his hands, knotting the rope precariously before shoving George onto the sandy beach.

Stumbling on his newfound legs, George crashed into a large rock, groaning as he held onto it for dear life. He heard Tommy suck in a breath and glared at the wincing boy, who sheepishly ducked his head in apology.

The whistling cut off abruptly and a voice called out across the bay. "Patches? Patches! Where are you going? Get back here!"

Tommy grabbed Tubbo's arm and pulled him down into the water. The boy briefly saluted George, a cheeky grin pulling his lips into a crescent curve the moon would envy. Then, they were gone, sucked far away into the ocean's currents.

George sat on the rock heavily, examining his legs with wide eyes. Long and pale, they extended from him like stems of a flower. The strangest flower he'd ever seen, that was for sure. Kicking them up, he grimaced at the strange weight. He much preferred his tail - it was prettier anyway.

A soft mewl sounded out amidst the whisper of the salty breeze and George whipped his head around, his eyes landing on a small animal standing before him. It leaped up onto the rock, winding around one of George's arms with another friendly noise. It was very small and lithe, and as George hesitantly touched it, he was pleased to discover it was fluffy and warm. As he delicately smoothed his fingers over the animal's ears, he decided he quite liked the small creature. It purred under his touch, rubbing up against his skin.

As heavy footsteps fell upon the densely packed sand, the creature took one more look at George before it sprung off the rock, bounding down the beach to greet the newcomer.

George couldn't help but gasp as a familiar figure rounded the corner of the beach, cloaked in a swash of thick cloth. Though his sight had lost color, George knew the cloth was a deep swash of green.

"Patches, there you are!" Dream, his mask secured over his fair face- stooped down, picking up the fluffy creature with a relieved sigh. "Why'd you run off, silly cat?"

Patches harrumphed, nudging Dream's hand before she jumped back onto the pale sand. She ran back towards George, looking back expectantly at Dream.

Dream sighed, but the sound was seemingly caught in his throat as he looked up, straight into George's eyes.

He stopped short, staring at George in shock. Moving slowly, as if in a daze, he reached a hand up to his face and pulled off his mask. George met his wide eyes with a bashful smile.

Dream was just as beautiful as he remembered him to be. Dare he say Dream looked even better when not on the brink of drowning? Even in black and white and grey, he was gorgeous. George thought it was somewhat unfair. Dream's parted lips clamped together and he stumbled forward, still in a shocked stupor.

"Hi," He murmured when he reached the rock and George felt his cheeks warm.

He opened his mouth to speak, but nothing came out. Nerves clamped down on him like a steel trap, holding his voice down like a prisoner in the pit of his bubbling stomach.

"I'm sorry," Dream breathed, not sounding sorry at all as he flashed George a charming smile. He still gripped the forgotten white mask at his side, his knuckles a little too pale for the nonchalance he exuded. "Have we met before? You look so familiar..."

George hesitated before shaking his head, his heart pounding away in his chest. Dream's eyes

narrowed and he felt a quick flutter of panic, wondering if Dream knew he was lying. But the man let it go, focusing on George's bare shoulders with a concerned expression.

"Aren't you cold? Summer evenings can get ruthless if you're not mindful." At George's silence, Dream bit his lip. George could almost see the cogs in his head turning. "Are you... would you want to come back to the castle with me? We have warm clothes and a spare room for you if you need one-" At George's enthusiastic nodding, Dream let out a breathy laugh. "Alright, that settles it then."

Suddenly, Patches jumped up onto George's shoulders and he lurched forward, caught off guard, and still struggling with his new center of balance. Strong arms wrapped around him as he tumbled off the rock, his surprised cry cut off almost instantly.

"Whoa!" Dream exclaimed, pulling George up. "Are you okay?"

Their eyes met and George felt heat pool in his wind-bitten cheeks as he realized how close they were. Dream seemed to realize just as quickly as George had and leaned back, coughing into his fist with a flushed face. George righted himself quickly, flashing a sheepish smile at Dream, who chuckled softly and turned to scold Patches.

The wind picked up around them and George shivered, pulling the thin cloth around himself tightly. How mortifying it was, to be stuck on a desolate beach with the boy he was meant to kiss- George shook the thought out of his head immediately, cursing to himself as he grew hot.

A comforting weight was pulled over his shoulders and George startled, looking up. Dream clasped his cloak around George's neck, pulling the hood up so it draped over him fittingly. The other's hands brushed his cheeks softly as they tugged on the fabric and George forced himself to look anywhere but Dream's warm eyes.

Goddamnit. He was smitten.

As Dream led George up the cliffs with a guiding hand on the small of his back, all George could focus on was the uncertainty of his steps and the jumble of nerves lighting his body aflame.

Upon entering the enormous castle, George was immediately met with a banshee-like scream, and he winced, stepping behind Dream instinctively.

The yelling only grew louder as its source approached them. The rowdy voice came in the form of a dark-haired man, his tan skin bearing a large, teasing grin. He had an iron sword strapped to his side, the handle well worn and scratched.

"Dream! There you are, the court supervisors have been going wild. You know they yelled at me? Me! For not knowing where their delinquent Crown Prince was. I should-" The man who spoke was incredibly familiar, and as their eyes met, it clicked.

This was the man from the ship, the one that Dream had saved before being tossed overboard on that stormy night. The night on which George had saved him. Had this man seen him in the waters?

As the man stared down at George with unreadable eyes, he felt cold sweat prickle on his palms. He was going to be found out. This man would tell Dream of George's true form and he'd be thrown out, exiled, maybe worse-

"Dream, you *scoundrel* !" The words exploded through the empty hall, accompanied by the man's bright laughter.

Confusion blossomed in George's uncertain eyes as he directed his gaze between Dream and the newcomer. They seemed like close friends from the way Dream's lips turned up, just visible under the full curve of his mask.

"Sapnap, you're too loud-" Dream groaned, shooting George an apologetic grimace as the man - Sapnap, approached them with a wide, devilish grin.

"Hey there," Sapnap smirked, his dark eyes searching for George's face, hidden under the thick hood of Dream's cloak. "I haven't seen you around these parts before. I'm Sapnap, and you?" His tone was sweet and thick, like syrup, and George swallowed his tongue, his throat as dry as the desert.

Catching his pointed stare, Dream rolled his eyes at Sapnap. "Sapnap-" He started but was silenced

by a glare.

"Bro, I covered for you with the advisors today and you were out romancing?" Sapnap scoffed. "I can't believe you convinced a girl to follow you back to the castle too." With that, Sapnap leaned in and took one of George's hands in his warm grasp.

George flicked his eyes up to Sapnap's, the hood of Dream's cloak masking most of his vision, and watched as he flashed another sure smirk. George's eyes narrowed at the man, his words registering finally. *Had he just called George a-*

Dream suddenly let out a high, strangled noise and George whipped towards him in concern. The man was doubled over on shaky legs, his arms swept around his stomach in a trembling hold. His eyes flickering to Sapnap, George wondered why the man wasn't worried about Dream. He clearly wasn't alright-

"Sapnap, you're an *idiot* ," Dream choked out through labored breaths and George realized in disbelief that the man was laughing.

Sapnap whirled on his friend with an angry yell. "Shut up! No, I'm not." His molten glare turned wary when he looked back at George. "Ignore that himbo-"

"Sap-" Dream wheezed again, moving towards George. Apologetically, Dream smiled at George before pulling back his hood.

George watched as Sapnap's eyes landed on him and a violent blush overtook his cheeks. Even without color, George could track the blossoms of warmth darkening Sapnap's skin.

"I-you-" Sapnap stammered while Dream fought to keep a straight face behind his mask. "You're not a woman," He mumbled and Dream lost it, his benevolent laughter bounding off the walls.

George cracked a small smile and shook his head, feeling the humiliation radiating from the boy.

"I- Shut up, Dream!" Sapnap screeched as Dream continued laughing, throwing in a couple of ecstatic lines of "Sapnap you're such an idiot-" as he cackled.

Very hastily, George was directed to a large room, much like the main hall of the underwater palace he had grown up in. Dream led the way, still chuckling, followed closely by a very indignant Sapnap, whose yells grew increasingly louder and angrier as they climbed the castle stairs.

Dinner was a quick event, passing by without any monumental events. Dream had ended up choking on his water as Sapnap recounted a colorful story about a recent battle in the North, but besides that, the castle was quiet and peaceful. The staff- who had left the boys to their own devices, were mere shadows darting hastily around the castle, in and out of the kitchen like mice.

Thanks to Sapnap's stories, George had learned many things about the kingdom he had wandered into. One, Dream was technically the King, set to be crowned officially in two days' time, on the dawn of his 18th year. George was visibly shocked at that - so young and already a King... It made him hesitant to ask about Dream's parents, but the boy had readily revealed to him that they had died years prior to an enemy attack. Sapnap had tensed at that, phantom memories weighing down his smile momentarily before he snapped back to his energetic self. George was surprised that someone so buoyant had potentially spilled blood by the buckets.

That was another thing - Sapnap was the Captain of the Royal Guard, his skill apparently only rivaled by the Crown Prince himself. (Though Sapnap boisterously claimed that Dream was lying and that he was so much better than the other).

Upon first glance, George would have thought Sapnap and Dream were too young to shoulder such burdens. But Sapnap had steel running through his very core, he could tell that almost instantly. And Dream... Dream was spoken for, George decided.

Feeling the pressing weight of eyes on him, George lifted his gaze. Dream flashed him a lopsided grin, his mask off now that the kitchen staff had been dismissed. Despite the nonchalant nature of the expression, George noticed Dream avert his gaze quickly, almost as though he was escaping his eyes.

Sapnap laughed low in his throat and that dangerous smirk that George was coming to learn was a trademark for him stretched across his lips as he leaned a little closer to George, his arms crossed on the wood table in front of him.

"So..." Sapnap started and Dream looked at him sharply, sending a silent message to him. "I can't imagine you've seen much of the city yet, have you?"

George shook his head, but his heart kicked up at the prospect. If the human cities were anything

like mer markets and streets and parades-

"I would offer to show you around but I've got those pesky Captain of the Royal Guard duties that I need to do..." Sapnap trailed off, turning his head slowly to Dream.

Expectant silence filled the air before Dream sighed, jostling Sapnap with a sharp jab of his elbow.

Dream smiled pleasantly over the sounds of Sapnap's whining. "Would you like to accompany me to the city tomorrow?"

George couldn't accept faster.

A delightful buzzing filled George's chest as Sapnap and Dream took hold of the conversation again. He couldn't restrain a brilliant grin as he imagined the wonders that lay behind the castle walls. The people, the places, the *treasures* .

He thought he could float away on the visions that filled his head, tinted with colors he was beginning to forget.

...

The heavy clash of swords broke the serenity of the night. The salt speckled wind brushed over Dream's bare face as he leaped over Sapnap's sword, watching the steel glint coolly in the slivers of moonlight peeking through the fleecy clouds above.

Sapnap grunted as Dream lashed out, planting his leather boot into Sapnap's chest in a brutal kick. They paused for a moment, silent but for the panting that swelled under the whistle of the wind. Dream smirked and Sapnap shook his head, a smile growing on his lips.

Then, they were back at it again like wolves, tearing into each other's defenses relentlessly. The whisper of metal on metal continued spasmodically, creating a ghostly melody as the two whirled around each other in the dark.

It all came to a sudden halt as Dream found an opening in the Captain's movements and struck, quick and sure like a viper.

Sapnap's eyes flicked down to the cool blade resting atop the fluttering skin of his neck and he sighed, shoving Dream's hand away with no real aggression.

"Another win for me," Dream sang, barely avoiding Sapnap's punch.

"Shut up! You cheated, you big lying cheat-" Sapnap, in the midst of rolling his eyes, stopped short, hesitating. He looked down at his sword uncertainly and he pursed his lips.

"What?" Dream pushed as the boy remained quiet. "Sap-"

"Will you have time to do this?" Sapnap blurted out and Dream stopped, taken back.

"Wh-"

"When you're King," Sapnap murmured, his tone souring. His eyes flicked away to the sullen sea and Dream watched as stone walls rose up, guarding his best friend's feelings with a stone-faced exterior.

As much as Dream wanted to reassure his best friend, he couldn't find the words in his throat. To be honest, Dream wasn't sure if he could even be a King. His parents' deaths were still too fresh in his mind - the horror at finding out, the heartbreaking sadness that Sapnap had barely managed to drag him out of, and the pure dread at knowing his time as a kid was running out. Perhaps it had run out a long time ago.

He had one more day before he was plunged into the duties of King - a role that felt too heavy on his trembling shoulders.

Shuffling feet brought him out of his thoughts and Dream looked back towards Sapnap, who was sitting on the rocky walls of the castle. His feet, dangling over the sharp drop to the sea, kicked up and down in restless motions. His mouth was a thin line, twisted like a coil of worn rope.

Dream sighed the sight of his friend's back, dark against the glimmering clouds.

They sat together, looking on at the lonesome moon masked by dark roiling clouds. The ocean waves rushed into the bay, crashing into each other in fits of panic. Dream frowned as he watched the frantic sea. Something darker was happening in the midst of that inky blackness.

"So, uh, are we going to talk about our special dinner guest, or are we just brushing past the fact that you brought a half-naked boy into the palace?" Sapnap broke the tense silence and Dream wished he hadn't.

"Sap," Dream groaned, but his mouth twitched up as he watched Sapnap brighten.

"I'm not to judge who you romance or not, Crown Prince Clay-" Dream shuddered at the use of his real name and Sapnap chuckled. "But seriously, Dream, who is he?"

"I-" A rush of shock rose in Dream's throat and his next words felt strained. "I don't know."

"What?" Sapnap exploded and Dream flinched before shushing him instinctively. "What do you mean you don't know?" Sapnap hissed while Dream raised his hands, feeling foolish.

"I guess I just never asked for his name."

"Dream," Sapnap groaned a guttural sound and covered his face with his hands while Dream stared listlessly out into the crashing waves.

"It's weird..." He muttered and Sapnap scoffed.

"Of course it's weird, you know some people would think to ask for a person's name before inviting them into their home-"

"No, not that, though that was pretty strange of me." Dream frowned. His energy seemed to pool in his hands, his fingers twitching in his lap. "I just... I felt like I knew him from somewhere. He just looked so familiar." It came out as a whisper, a feeble admission sent out into the howls of the wind.

Sapnap, to his credit, didn't laugh or insult him. Maybe it was something in Dream's voice, he wondered. Maybe Sapnap could tell how frayed he was.

They sat in silence that was neither comfortable nor uncomfortable. A terrible slap of the waves against the lower castle walls sent a spray of icy droplets spattering against Dream's face.

Sapnap groaned and swung back around to get off the edge, but a husky chuckle rose in his throat before he could take a single step.

"Oh, Dream," He drawled and Dream rolled his eyes.

"Sapnap, I really don't need this right now."

"But Dream," Sapnap pushed, and for god's sake Dream could practically see the grin on Sapnap's lips.

"I think you'll like this Dream."

"Oh my *god*, Sapnap, what is it?"

"Seems like you have a secret admirer."

"Oh." Dream whipped around, his gaze landing on an open window overlooking the grassy courtyard.

Leaning against the balcony with his chin set in his hands, was the boy, staring into the horizon. Now dressed in lovely blue and white, he was observing the black waves rise and collapse back down in fits of sea spray. Though, Dream noticed, he didn't look scared of the wild ocean. He looked almost...

Gorgeous dark eyes met Dream's in an instant and he startled, his breath catching in his throat.

" *Oh* ," He murmured as the boy smiled at him, cheeks rosy in the frosty winds that swept around them. The boy waved at him shyly and Dream didn't even register the smirk curling the edges of his lips up coyly. Not until the boy flushed darker and ducked his head down, quickly retreating back into the golden square of his room.

"'Oh' is right, lover boy." Sappnap sidled up next to him, nudging Dream under the ribs with a pointy elbow. "Bet ya can't wait for your *date* tomorrow."

"Shut up, you idiot," Dream scoffed and Sappnap giggled like a small child, swinging his sword at his side as he strode up the steps to the warm halls of the castle.

But even though the boy in the window had long since disappeared into the depths of his room, Dream couldn't shake the thought that when he was looking at the sea, he had looked incredibly sad...

...

Are they looking for me?

Do they even know I'm gone?

Do they even care ?

George stopped himself, his eyes drifting shut for a moment. What a mistake. Instead of the sight of waves cutting through each other, the images of his father, his brothers, Bad - they all stared at him with betrayal scrawled across their contorted faces.

A deep ache resounded in George's chest. Had someone carved his heart out and left a hollow chamber? He felt that must be it. What else could explain the profound emptiness he felt clawing out from inside of him.

The low murmur of voices sounded out on the dull whistle of the breeze and George looked down to the stretch of land beneath him. Instantaneously, he was met with the grey-washed figure of Dream. His hand, the traitorous thing, seemed to move on its own and he waved bashfully, feeling

more and more stupid by the passing second.

A bubbling heat pooled in his stomach as Dream grinned back at him, full and confident. The molten feeling flew to his face and George forced himself to look away, turning back to the white light of his room.

And just like that, the hole in his chest filled a little.

As George fell back on the soft mattress of the bed, his mind was filled with visions of familiar things. Those shiny blue scales that he missed so much. The colorful ocean he grew up in. The last rays of the sun slipping over the delicate edge of the world before stars came shooting out of the darkness.

However, one new thing joined the plethora of memories.

A figure cloaked in starlight and masked by the moon with a smile so bright it made George feel like he could see in all meanings of the word.

For the first time, George dreamt of Dream.

...

Unknown to the sleeping Prince, who rested comfortably under a snug blanket of stars, the waters he came from were pure chaos.

Out of the shadows of the deep, darkened ocean, a worn figure fought to keep moving. Wilbur entered the throne room delirious, his breaths coming out in ragged huffs. His weary eyes flickered up to meet his younger brother before his strength spilled out of him like blood in the water.

Eret shot forward, his tail a magnificent blur of pinks, purples, and blues as he caught Wilbur in his arms. The eldest Prince was trembling in exhaustion, his face waxen and creased in pain.

"I've searched everywhere, Eret," Wilbur's voice was thick with tears and remorse as he screwed his eyes shut tight. "We can't find him anywhere." His voice broke and Eret held on a little tighter, a little stronger. Wilbur was a broken mess slipping away with the unforgiving current, and all Eret could do was desperately try to hold the pieces together before he lost his brother entirely. He couldn't lose another.

Eret himself had been out in the ocean for the entire day, only having returned to the castles to reconvene with Wilbur, who had wandered in several hours later. They were tired to the bone, muscles aching from the day spent searching every cave, every crevasse, every single speck of coral-riddled sand for George, who had never returned home from the Grotto.

King Philza was a wreck, demolished by the thought that he was the reason for his son's disappearance. Despite Wilbur and his attempts to console their father, Philza was driven mercilessly by fear and guilt, refusing to rest until George was found. He stirred the oceans with his trident and sifted through the kingdom for the boy, only growing more and more distraught as no sign of George appeared.

No one knew where Philza was now. All they knew of was the ocean's deep turmoil and the petulant cries of the wind, haunting the empty streets.

A small whimper broke Eret's thoughts and he pulled Wilbur to the thrones, setting him down on his seat. Looking down at his brother, Eret could tell he was seconds from passing out. Gone was Wilbur's reassuring smile, his handsome face turned hollow and fearful. Clutching Wilbur close, Eret could only whisper a forlorn prayer to whoever was out there.

"Please," His voice came out as a desperate growl, his patience worn too thin to amuse the gods. "Please, just give him back to us." Traitorous tears prickled Eret's eyes and he swiped a hand across his face, turning back to Wilbur with a shaky smile and a hushed promise to his brother. "He'll be alright." He told Wilbur, who was silent, his breathing shallow.

Watching from a distance, two figures turned away to give the brothers some privacy.

"Take me with you."

Skeppy turned to Bad with a frown. The boy's bright eyes were narrowed in determination, his fists curled at his sides. They were shaking, Skeppy noticed.

Logically, he knew what he had to do. As Captain of the Guard, Skeppy's duty was to the kingdom and its citizens. He couldn't put anyone in danger's way, especially not Bad.

He yanked tightly on the straps of his glimmering armor, turning away from Bad as he pulled his sword out from his side. He hefted it over his shoulder, swallowing down the bitter flavor on his tongue. "Bad, you know I can't-"

"Please, Skeppy," The words rushed out of Bad in a hoarse plead and the boy grabbed onto his arm, forcing Skeppy to meet his eyes.

The Captain grimaced, tugging his arm out of Bad's grip. "Bad, you've done enough. Go home and get some sleep or-"

"Skeppy, I *can't*." Bad shuddered, warm tears streaking down his face. Skeppy blinked in surprise at the shaking boy before him. How had he missed this? The dark circles under Bad's eyes, the trembling of his hands, the tears pooling in those shiny eyes-

Bad shivered through a sob and went to turn away when two arms wrapped around him, holding him back gently.

What was he doing?

Skeppy stared at the ceiling, keeping his eyes off of Bad's quivering form, entirely too small in his arms.

Seconds, maybe minutes, passed before Bad whispered, "Please, Skeppy. Let me go. It's my fault he's out there and I won't rest before he's back home, safe. I swear it."

Skeppy sighed and let go, watching Bad as he furiously rubbed an arm across his tear-stained cheeks. The boy set his shoulders and looked at Skeppy with pure fire burning in his eyes.

"Alright," Skeppy whispered, shoving his sword into Bad's hands and pulling him out of the throne room into the dark ocean. "Let's go."

Chapter End Notes

Hello lovely people!

Thank you for being so patient with me <33

I really wanted to find some time to upload this quickly because the support for this fic has been overwhelming and I can't thank yall enough! (So here was Chapter 3, edited and uploaded during my math class :p)

Let me know if you enjoyed and I'll see you all in the next chapter!

<3 <3 <3

Tour of the Kingdom

Chapter Summary

Villagers twirled around each other, dancing elegantly to the gorgeous music in lovely steps and neat turns.

"Do you want to..."

George glanced up and saw a hand extended out to him.

Dream stood before him, an inviting smile peeking out at him from under the curve of his mask.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The wind rushed past George's ears in a flurry of low howls, accompanied by the creature's rhythmic gallops beneath him. A grin so wide it was almost painful split his red face and he let out a loud whoop as they cut through the grasslands around them like a shark through water.

The powerful mare shot through the air, jumping straight over a thin riverbed. George felt like he was floating, reaching his hands up into the air to soar high, high, higher, up into the wooly clouds and light skies.

He heard a deep chuckle behind him, husky and right in the delicate shell of his ear. George flushed as Dream's arms knocked against his sides, his hands fighting for purchase on the horse's reins. His own arms now at the horse's neck, George forced his gaze forward, no matter how much he wanted to turn his neck and gaze behind him.

"You'd think this was your first time on a horse," He heard Dream murmur as they slowed down, the world around them coming into a clear view. They were in a large field, dotted with small puffs of dandelions and swinging plains of grass. In the far distance, George could see the twinkling golden lights of a village beckoning out to them.

George absent-mindedly stroked the mare's silky neck as he kept his eyes trained on the faraway sight.

The morning was cold, the humid air speckled with mist that clung to George's eyelashes. Sapnap had sent them off with a look too mischievous to mean anything good, promising them that he'd hold down the fort and keep Patches out of trouble. Dream was unconvinced, but they set out on his horse - a beautiful chestnut mare, towards the village.

George had only heard whispers of the human villages that rose from coast to coast, bustling with life and noise. King Philza had informed them to stay away, lest they'd be seen, and who knew what would happen if humans discovered mermaids existed?

So begrudgingly, George had never wandered too far to the sandy shores of the surface. The few glimpses of villages he had seen had been swift and shallow. He didn't even think he'd seen a villager before, just the blocky structures of their houses standing against the rising sun, casting long shadows against the water below.

"Are you okay?"

George twisted in the saddle's seat, knocking his shoulder against Dream's arm, which still held fast onto the reins. At the sudden movement, the horse trotted forward and George swayed precariously as it pitched him off balance. Instinctively, his hands shot out, grabbing onto the thick cloth of Dream's hooded cloak as the horse tottered through the tall grass.

Dream's face stared down at him, the corner of his lip curling up as his eyes pointedly trailed down to George's grip on the front of his cloak.

Feeling the burning hot scrape of embarrassment ripping through him, George dropped his hands to his lap, his eyes focused on the fragile curl of his fingers.

Dream shifted in the saddle, and George knew he was looking at him.

Heavy silence pooled around them, charging the air with staticky discomfort.

The crack of the reins shattered the quiet and a broken yelp was torn from George's throat and flung into the air as the horse darted forward. Flattened against Dream's chest from the sudden speed of the mare, George shut his eyes as his fingers found themselves entangled in the cloak once more.

There was a rumbling against his ear, and George huffed out an incredulous puff as he realized Dream was laughing, his own lips curling into a grin.

Focusing a little harder, his eyes widened as he realized he could hear the pounding of Dream's heart thundering against his ear.

They sped through the wide plains, and by the flutter of his own heart and the wind sweeping around him, George could have sworn they were flying.

...

Villages were loud, George noted as Dream tied his horse up to a fence post, sliding over a few gems to the Shepherd as payment.

Surrounded by a lush oakwood forest, the village was expansive and filled to the brim with people flitting about market stands and houses. Homey builds lined the cobblestone streets, lit up from the inside with golden torches. The hectic sounds of trading could be heard from the market stands, where merchants haggled their prices with tradesmen and travelers passing through.

Dream sidled up next to him and looked down at George with an inviting nod to the market. "You wanna go?"

Taking no further prodding, George grabbed a hold of Dream's arm, not wanting to lose him in the crowd, and set out to the marketplace.

They passed a villager leading several feathered birds, quite round and loud, to the farm, and George stared transfixed at the clucking creatures as they passed by. The human animals were incredibly strange, in the ways they moved and spoke. Fish made little noise, George reflected with a wince as the birds screeched loudly.

"C'mon." Dream guided him to the stands- sturdy wooden structures with colorful roofs of spun wool.

Anything and everything was sold at the market, an ecstatic George thought as he dragged Dream further into the bustling area.

Heavenly smells from stands lined with loaves of bread, pies, and cakes beckoned them close while bookstands with pages filled with boundless stories whispered over to him. Stands with bubbling cauldrons and merchants selling a litany of objects passed by in a blur of time. Though he bought nothing- what money did he have to purchase such treasures anyway- George doubted he had ever been this satisfied. The dilapidated treasures of his Grotto were of no comparison to the beautiful trinkets and tools of the marketplace.

Dream, to his credit, kept up with George as he pulled him along, tugging incessantly on the fabric of his sleeve whenever he saw anything that caught his eye- which, to be fair, was most things in the village.

At some point during the exploration, George had stopped holding onto his sleeve, and instead, their hands lay intertwined at their sides. Neither of them mentioned anything, but when George would see something interesting and squeeze Dream's palm slightly, and when Dream would gently lead George to a new treasure, their connection became inherently apparent. It was all George could do to not die right there in the middle of the bustling crowds.

After an extensive search of the market, Dream had purchased a loaf of bread at one of the food stalls, insisting they had to eat. The two had found a small bench across a large courtyard and tore off chunks of the fluffy bread, readily popping them into their hungry mouths. It was then that George decided- if he could bring anything from the market back home, it would be bread. Dream laughed in his painful-sounding way as George stuffed as much of the bread as he could fit into his mouth.

Then, the music started.

It built gradually, coming from all around them in the vast courtyard. It seemed to have an effect on the entire village, as everyone took a collective pause in their busy work to admire the lilting tune.

George closed his eyes as the soothing music spread, growing in volume and revelry. Chatter sounded out once more, but unlike the chaotic din of the marketplace, this noise was jubilant.

George opened his eyes and stared in surprise at the scene before him. Villagers twirled around each other, dancing elegantly to the gorgeous music in lovely steps and neat turns. Turning to

Dream to catch his reaction, George was met with an empty seat.

"Do you want to..." George glanced up and saw a hand extended out to him.

Dream stood before him, an inviting smile peeking out at him from under the curve of his mask. Despite the nonchalant look, George noticed Dream's shoulders were tense and his hand wavered before him, a lone piece of driftwood floating in an ocean of uncertainty.

George reached out and clasped his hand.

Dream's small smile melted into a genuine grin and he pulled George along onto the stone courtyard until they were surrounded by the swinging melody of music and the bodies moving around them like kelp in the currents.

George looked up into the white mask, peering past it at the face he envisioned so vividly. With a hand in Dream's and Dream's hand on his waist, he ignored the shaking in his legs, the hesitation in his step. Dream broke down his doubts with that stupid grin of his, piercing through George's defenses easily.

Dream extended his arm and George followed the step, turning smoothly before being pulled back into Dream's hold. The music swelled around them, and every little thing fell away. All he could feel was Dream's hands holding him close. All he could hear was the thud of his heart in his chest, and he wondered why no one else seemed to hear it. And all he could see was Dream.

A guiding hand on the small of his back sent warmth rippling through him as Dream twirled him once more before holding him close as they dipped down momentarily. George felt submerged, falling deep in the clutches of something too scary to think much about. They pulled back up, breaking the surface, and George took a shaky breath.

Dream held his hand tightly, pressed against his chest like some unspoken promise. They were close, George thought numbly as his eyes trailed across Dream's lips. Too close, maybe.

They gravitated towards each other, the mysterious moon and the alluring waves, one dragging the other into his orbit until they were tripping over stars and falling through the universe.

His breath held in his chest, George looked up at Dream, his body on fire.

Dream stepped back.

George was doused in icy water, and his hand fell to his side, his arms itching to curl around himself, longing to disappear from the face of the Earth.

The silence between them was horrible, feeding George's fears with malicious whispers.

"I- I don't even know your name," Dream murmured, his voice thick with guilt and pain, and George stopped short.

Brilliant crashes of emotion struck him. Shock, being the most prominent. He hadn't spoken much, he knew, because the thought of opening his mouth and talking to Dream made him want to shrivel up. It made the string of words he so desperately wanted to speak tangled and knot in his throat.

Dream pursed his lips and looked away. George startled at the raw hurt emanating from the boy.

"George."

The word slipped out before he could even realize what he was doing. It hung in the air, spun of glass, just waiting to be broken.

Dream's head snapped to him, and George watched as he took a step back. Dream's lips, previously a thin strip of disappointment, were a perfectly shaped "O".

"Did you just-" The boy ran his hands through his dark, sandy hair, as though he could hardly piece together his thoughts. "Is that your name?"

Bashfully, George nodded. "Yes." He offered the small word and a memory of himself surfaced. A younger George, presenting a shiny pearl to his father, anxious that he might hate it.

"George," Dream tested the word out almost breathlessly, his hand grasping George's tightly.

The memory was shoved away from his mind as he looked down at their intertwined hands.

"George," Dream exclaimed again with a laugh, lifting George's hand and twirling him suddenly.
"George!"

"Yes!" George laughed at the pure absurdity of it all, and Dream joined not a second later.

Villagers all around were staring at the two and George faintly realized that at some point, the song had ended and the dancers had retreated back to normalcy.

But as Dream held George close, he couldn't find it within himself to care. Dream's hands came to rest on George's sides and he lifted George up, high into the sky. George tipped his head back, bubbles of laughter escaping him as Dream spun him around to an imaginary melody.

George had never felt as light as he did at the moment. With the echoes of laughter ringing around them and the warm hands around him, raising him up to the illuminating rays of the sun, he almost forgot about everything else.

Then, Schlatt's face flashed in his mind and the laughter died in his throat.

"You have three days."

George shuddered at the haunting memory, hating how Schlatt's voice slipped through the cracks in his defenses, seeping worry and fear into his mind.

Perhaps Dream sensed George's flip in emotion.

Setting George down gently, he was right there, pulling George's hands up to cup in the space between their chests.

"I can't believe - I mean, I was beginning to think you didn't speak-" Dream spoke through an elated, breathy rush, still grinning like a mad man.

George felt heat blossom on his face and he bit the inside of his cheek. "I was embarrassed, I think."

Dream laughed at that, more of an incredulous burst of joy than a teasing one, and George cracked a smile.

The idle eyes of passersby faded away and the village returned back to its previous, hectic mess of the calls of merchants and the occasional sounds of livestock. No one paid much attention to the two boys standing in the courtyard, gripping on to each other's hands like their palms held the secrets of the world.

"George, huh?" Dream murmured and George looked quizzically at him.

Dream's smile was so wide, so beautiful, beneath his white mask and George felt his chest ache. A thousand malevolent jellyfish brushed against his hands, his cheeks, his heart, leaving painful buzzing.

"Come on, I have something I want to show you," Dream murmured and George nodded.

As they rode away from the village, now a pinprick of gold fading away in the distant twilight, Dream captured George's hand in his own.

George remembered, absentmindedly as the sun began its lazy descent into the horizon, that when his younger self had offered his father that pearl, King Philza had accepted it with a warm smile.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, this took a while to get out!

This chapter was originally getting to be almost 8000 words, and I decided (grudgingly) to split it up, and this was the ending that made the most sense. That's

why this chapter is a lil' shorter than the other ones - but not to worry, I should be able to post the next chapter within the next day or so, so just hold tight until then :))

On a separate note, I can't thank everyone enough for the tremendous support!! All your lovely comments mean the world to me and I was so shocked that we just hit 200 kudos :D!!! This has been so much fun to write and it's all thanks to all you wonderful people.

Let me know ur thoughts on this chapter and I'll see you all soon! :D

Happy Halloween!! :]

Kiss The Boy

Chapter Summary

Knees knocked against his and George's eyes flitted up to Dream's face. They were close, George noted as he wandered over Dream's features freely. Dangerously so.

Dream swallowed and George's eyes tracked the bob of his pale throat to the sincerity of his eyes. Everything paused for one infinite second as they traced the constellations in each other's eyes.

The creatures in the lake buzzed with noise. Even they knew what would happen next.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

As George tripped over yet another fallen branch in the dense forest, he found it increasingly harder to stay optimistic.

"Dream, where are we going?" He hissed, barely managing to follow the boy trekking in front of him.

Dream clearly had experience with this. His steps were light and quick on the muddy earth, sidestepping holes and avoiding darker pockets amongst the trees. George, who had gotten legs the literal day before, had no such skill and stumbled along the slippery ground, out of breath.

"Shh, we're almost there," Dream mumbled as he whacked a low hanging branch away, holding it back for George to pass under.

The moon was a sliver of sterling peeking through the expansive canopy above them, a winking beacon of light for the two wandering boys. If not for the luminous orb, George would have stepped into a plunging ravine miles back.

Dream turned back and flashed him a wide smile as he finally slowed his brisk pace. His mask winked at him from where it was tied at his side by his sword, pale in the moonlight.

"You ready?" He asked, and George looked up at his gleeful face, eyes sparkling with anticipation.

Feeling his words catch in his throat, George swallowed them down and simply nodded.

Dream's hand reached out and grabbed George's, and then they were sprinting forward, bursting through the treeline like birds breaking through clouds. Combing out leaves from his hair, he looked up at the clearing around them.

George gasped.

Dream, standing beside him, gauged George's reaction, his head held high with pride. "Isn't it great?"

It truly was.

They stood on the creaky wooden planks of a makeshift dock, lit up with old iron lanterns blazing in the dusky night. The water around them was crystal clear even in the growing darkness, and George could see the sandy bottom of the lake shallows. Riverbeds full of plants and reeds shook as the wind tousled their stems, creating a low buzz in the serenity. The moon was a sea lantern suspended in the sky, full and shining and absolutely phenomenal.

At the very end of the dock, a rowing boat made of oak floated in the still water. It was small, with just enough room for two, and a thin paddle propped up against the seat.

"This is amazing," George breathed, his eyes wide and bright with the reflection of the moon.

Dream noticeably smirked, his arms folding against his chest contently as they took a moment to breathe in the crisp air- so different from the salty winds that enveloped the castle.

"How did you even find this place?" George wondered out loud as they stepped down the dock, heading towards the rowboat, which was tied securely to one of the lantern posts.

"Sapnap and I would go exploring a lot as kids when the castle got too boring. This was one of our early finds," Dream explained as he untied the ropes tethering the boat to shore. "We don't get to do that a lot nowadays." Dream added, his tone souring.

George pursed his lips, concern running through him as he watched the boy shove the rowboat out into the lake with considerable force.

He had noticed, since that first dinner at the castle, that Dream tried to avoid all conversation about the castle and his duties as the only heir of the kingdom. He knew about that kind of pressure - he'd watched Wilbur grow up with the weight of the crown heavy on his shoulders, even heavier on his mind. George could only be thankful that he was spared from those tremendous expectations, especially as he observed Dream and his clenched hands, fingers flexing dangerously under the lantern's warm glow.

He wanted to reach out to Dream, he wanted so desperately to be able to say the right words. Those special sentences that would make everything better. He opened his mouth, taking a step towards him.

Nothing came out.

Dream looked back at George with a confused smile, his eyebrows scrunching in a way too endearing for George to bear. He hopped into the boat and turned back to George with a palm open to the stars and the warmest eyes, his worries slipped away.

Dream helped him into his seat, laughing as George gripped the sides of the rocking boat with white-knuckled hands and a grimace as thin as hay.

Swiftly, Dream rowed them out to the middle of the lake and they watched the sky grow darker, the light fading away over the forest canopy. George was sure that it must have been incredible - the swirls of grey and faded blue in the sky told him that he was missing out on the sunset of a lifetime. He stole a look at Dream and his heart stopped.

Dream, bathing in the dwindling rays of the golden sun, was staring out at the sky in absolute awe. His lips were curled up, his head tilted up to relish in the final minutes of the quickly retreating day. He was gorgeous.

"God, the sunset was beautiful tonight." Dream's voice broke the quiet of the night and George flinched, snapping his gaze away from the glowing boy as if he had been burnt. "Best one I've seen in a while," Dream added, his voice carrying notes of wistfulness.

Glaring up at the gloomy skies, George bit back a mocking laugh.

"I wouldn't know." The words slipped out and he paused. George flicked his nervous eyes to Dream, cursing himself out in his head. *Did I just-*

"What do you mean?" Dream asked, his brow furrowed in confusion, looking up at the sky as if to check it was still there. When George didn't answer, Dream shifted to face him. "George?"

Goddamnit. He could practically feel Dream's eyes on him, looking him over for any signs of pain, any physical wounds he could wipe away. He couldn't tell Dream about Schlatt or about his true form. He'd think George was insane. George would have to return to that cold sea, all alone.

"I-" George huffed, stumbling over his thoughts as he refused to look at Dream. "I can't see color." The words were thick and suffocating, feeling more and more like a colossal lie hidden in a thin slice of truth.

"Oh." The word hung heavy between them.

"Yeah."

Neither one of them spoke for a while.

"I'm sorry." Dream offered first and George hated the tension between them. Charged and almost tangible, like fog, it dimmed their moods and dragged their spirits down into the depths of the dark lake.

"It's not your fault," George dismissed, his fingers digging into the soft flesh of his palms. His eyes fell to his feet and Schlatt's booming voice echoed in his head.

"Remember the deal, George."

"You say that as though it's yours," Dream quipped with a small smile, and the words scattered Schlatt's terrible murmur away.

George was silent, biting his lip. They had known each other for barely a day now, and Dream could read him front to back like a book.

"Yeah," He mumbled, toeing at the branches littering the bottom of the rowboat. He knocked knees with Dream in the enclosed space, ignoring the sparks that ran up his back at the slight contact.

"I'm crowned King tomorrow," Dream spoke simply, and George visibly relaxed at the change of topic, however sudden it may have been.

Reaching low into the boat, Dream's hand curled around a branch and tossed it into the glimmering lake. It broke the surface with a splash, sending some creature retreating into the forest in a scurry of padded feet.

George turned to him curiously as Dream stared at the rings of ripples spreading through the calm water.

"Congratulations," He offered, though by the way Dream stared sullenly at the water, George gathered his newfound title was of no happiness to him.

"Thanks."

"For someone who's about to be crowned King of a whole region, you don't sound too happy," George remarked with a teasing smile, but it dropped as soon as he saw Dream's dejected face. "Hey," He leaned closer to the boy, hesitant for a long second before taking Dream's tightly fisted hand in his own. "What's wrong?"

He didn't miss the way Dream's eyes trailed over their intertwined hands, sending a rush of heat to George's face.

"It's stupid," He muttered, looking away while George was on the brink of pulling his hand back self consciously. Dream ran his free hand down his face, his grip on George's hand tightening.

"Tell me," George spoke firmly, reaching up to pull Dream's fingers from where they pressed into his tired face.

Dream sighed, his eyes flicking up to the moon as though the shiny surface could give him all the answers. "I just- How am I supposed to do this all George? Be a King, I mean. Kings rule the whole country, every single person and their children, all their problems, and all their fears. They need someone smart who can rule fairly and give them harvest every year, someone tactical who can secure allies, and someone strong who can lead their soldiers to battle. I'm eighteen and I know that's old, but selfishly I thought I had more time. And I'm forcing Sapnap to grow up as well, forcing him to do and see unspeakable things in the false name of peace. I- I can't help but think that my people deserve more-"

"Dream," George interrupted the other's rushed rant, feeling suffocated by the onslaught of panicked words. Dream's worries were a steel anchor, chains wrapped tight around his legs, dragging him down. And George, in his attempt to save him, was drowning himself.

"Sorry," Dream looked away, frustration pulling his brows down to blazing eyes. "I shouldn't have made you listen to all that."

"No, Dream-" George tried but he could feel the walls rising around Dream and the mask slipping on, hiding away his hurt and fear.

"It's fine, George. That was stupid of me anyway." Dream's voice wavered and as he turned to glare at the still water holding them up, George swore the moon illuminated the shiny swash of tears in his eyes.

"Listen to me you idiot," George spoke bluntly and Dream huffed in surprise. George realized with a start that Dream, like himself, was royalty. The boy had most likely never been spoken to in a harsh manner, aside from Sapnap's harmless teasing.

"Who are you calling a-"

"You are kind, you are strong, and you are fair." He pulled Dream's hands to his lap, gripping them with a clear purpose. "How many Kings would help someone like me, someone who barely even spoke to you? I haven't even thanked you yet and you've treated me with nothing but kindness and respect. Dream," feeling bold, George's fingers stretched out and grazed Dream's jaw, lifting his gaze up towards him. "You are going to make a brilliant King, I know it."

Dream's teary eyes widened and the boy stared at him, shellshocked. He searched George's expression, looking for any disingenuity in his set lips, a flash of any sign that George was lying in

his blazing brown eyes. When he found none, he slumped over, collapsing in on himself.

"George..." He croaked out and George bit his lip before pulling him into a tight embrace. The boat swayed to and fro as they held onto each other, falling apart and fusing together all at the same time.

When their arms fell to their sides and they were left looking at each other in the tender light, George realized how beautiful the night was.

Frogs croaked out melodic notes from where they sat happily on lily pads, joined by the gentle tweets of river-dwelling birds. Clouds of fireflies lit up the lake like miniature suns, their glows brightening and dimming like the inhale and exhale of nature itself.

He couldn't tell exactly when the night had shifted from endless black to a dream of starry skies and music.

Knees knocked against his and George's eyes flitted up to Dream's face. They were close, George noted as he wandered over Dream's features freely. Dangerously so.

Dream swallowed and George's eyes tracked the bob of his pale throat to the sincerity of his eyes.

Everything paused for one infinite second as they traced the constellations in each other's eyes. Looking at the boy across from him, illuminated in streaks of moonlight, George felt a spark of something so divine it couldn't be captured by words.

The creatures in the lake buzzed with noise. Even they knew what would happen next.

George didn't know who leaned forward first, just that they were moving - two planets sucked into each other's orbits, two stars set to supernova, two boys sitting in a boat, too close, too much, too-

The world flipped upside down in a flash of forest trees, clear skies, and then water. Cold, cold water. Seeping into his veins, pulling him under, shocking him out of his senses.

A strangled scream escaped George's throat as he was submerged in the darkness, sinking down, down, down. Or maybe he was floating to the surface. In the never-ending black of the icy water,

he couldn't tell where he was. The moon disappeared from view, tipped off the face of the Earth.

His hands shot out in the water, clawing through the liquid with mindless panic.

Where is he? Where is he, where is Dream- I can't see him, I can't-

A horrible sob built up in George's chest as he searched through the murky waters, desperately trying to catch a flash of that cocky smirk or a glimpse of that round, pale mask.

All he saw were the small bubbles rising up from his lips, dancing around him tauntingly.

A sudden shower of bright sparks lit up around him and George flailed in the water, whirling around to find their source. He caught a glimpse of a dark tail slithering through the water before it was gone.

George narrowed his eyes.

Tommy , he knew in an instant.

In his panicked daze, he opened his mouth to yell to the retreating boy but clamped his lips shut as water gushed into his throat, pouring down his lungs in a frigid, viscous liquid. George's eyes widened in fear and sudden, horrible realization as a single truth struck him like a blow to the face.

He was human now. And humans drowned.

An unimaginable pressure built up in his chest, making him tear up. Flashes of white-hot pain struck him over and over, relentless and cruel. His eyes fluttered shut, sick of the inky blackness that surrounded him. Everything was a mess of pain and panic, making George's head feel too light like someone had stuffed his ears full of cotton and his mouth full of sand.

As he went limp with pain and paralyzing fear, George sunk down until he felt his back brush against something solid.

He forced his eyes open, fighting to keep awake. It was a battle he'd lose sooner rather than later, he realized with terrifying dread. Something battled against him and he faintly wondered which creature of the lake came to send him off.

As the water around him grew hazy, George could barely register the impossibly strong grip of hands on his arms, hands on his hips, hands curling around his chest and heaving him through the water.

Everything was a blur of loud noises and pain, all over him. George moaned as he was dragged onto solid ground and turned over immediately. Water bubbled up his throat, bitter and endless, and he emptied his lungs miserably, fighting for a breath of air.

Hands cupped his face, the same hands that had saved him - George thought faintly as water spilled from his lips, like liquid death seeping out from him.

George blearily turned his head to the owner of those hands, a smile coming to his face as he met Dream's face.

Sodden and shivering in the night air, Dream's eyes were blown wide with fear as his eyes trailed over George, searching for something. His lips were moving rapidly, but George couldn't hear what he was saying. Raising a hand to smooth out the angry crease between Dream's brows, George frowned. Why was his hand trembling? Why couldn't he move? Everything was cloudy and his lungs burned with every grueling breath he took.

"Dream?" He rasped out, and with the word, everything snapped into clarity.

"George," Dream gasped in relief, grabbing George's outstretched hand and moving it to rest on his cheek. "You're going to be fine, okay? Hold on-" Dream pulled George into his lap and slipped his arms around George's shivering form. He lifted them up carefully, swaying on shaking legs for a second. Then, they were hurtling through the forest. All George could hear was the dull howl of the wind, accompanied by the frantic pitch of Dream's voice- repeatedly assuring George he would be fine.

A delirious smile overtook George's lips as he looked up at the round white moon above them, hiding and reappearing behind branches like a playful ghost. Black dots danced in his vision, giving the moon a familiar face.

"Dream," He murmured hoarsely, trailing a hand down Dream's jaw. "Why are you in the sky?"

Dream's reply was lost to the cavernous abyss that swallowed George up, pulling him so far down, he lost sight of the smiling moon above.

...

Dream watched with burning eyes as a training dummy fell before him, wool spilling out of its burlap body grotesquely, like snowy blood bursting from the crude figure.

A heavy growl tore through his throat as he swung his blade once more, the diamond edge slicing through dummy after dummy recklessly. Broken breaths ravaged his throat, coming out of him in husky huffs. Everything was red hot. He was filled with such loathing and rage, it fuelled his arm, swinging and stabbing without remorse.

He barely registered a flash of white to his left as he dashed forward, cutting down burlap figures left and right, until nothing but their broken bodies remained.

"Dream-"

With a carnal roar, Dream whipped around, his sword already slashing down in a sudden arc.

Sapnap let out a surprised exclaim as he brought his sword up, barely managing to catch Dream's powerful blow on the iron face of his blade.

The grating squeal of metal on diamond sounded out and Dream stared down at the Captain - his friend, through the glimmering facet of the sword. Catching the flash of fear in Sapnap's wide eyes, he faltered, his grip on the weapon loosening.

Noticing the shift, Sapnap flicked his sword, catching Dream's blade. His eyes followed the sword as it skittered across the cobblestone ground, landing a few paces away.

"Dream!" Sapnap thundered, his dark brows drawn together in a fierce mix of anger and disbelief. "What the hell was that?"

Shame hit him like a blow to the face and Dream stared at his friend through his mask. "Sapnap, I-"

"Dude! What is wrong with you?"

Dream flinched back, his gaze falling to his boots. Sapnap grimaced, the anger seeping out of his eyes, replaced with steadily growing concern.

"Dream-" Sapnap took a hesitant step towards his friend, sheathing his sword at his side.

He stepped over a dismembered training dummy and Dream tried not to focus on the cotton blood, spewed out across the cobblestone like wisps of a cloud.

"What happened?"

Dream shivered at the question. Standing in the complete darkness of the courtyard with only the moon as his light, it was far too easy to lose himself to the anger and fear waging war within him. His cloak, wrapped around his tight shoulders, was still damp- a pressing reminder of everything that had happened at the lake.

George, in that boat, clasping his hands like they were raw emeralds, holding his eyes like they held the knowledge of the world. The words he had spoken, the ones that had meant more to Dream than George could ever know.

You are going to make a brilliant King, I know it.

George's pale face flashed in his mind, his limp body splayed out against the lake floor like a corpse. The terrible gurgle of water in his lungs, the hollow rasps of his breaths- the crazed smile

that spread across his beautiful face before his eyes rolled up into his head, and Dream's heart stopped. That horrible moment when he thought that George was-

"Dream, tell me-"

"God, Sapnap, he- George almost died." Dream burst out; frustration prickling his eyes in the form of tears.

"Who?" Sapnap frowned before his brows flew up, his eyes turning to the illuminated window of the boy's room above. "Oh! His name is George?"

"Sap, I almost killed him," He groaned, burying his face in his trembling hands. The day's exhaustion was beginning to catch up with him, and Dream's knees felt seconds away from giving out.

"Right, not the point, gotcha." Sapnap mumbled. "Hey, calm down. Tell me exactly what happened."

"He won't want to see me again, Sap."

"Don't be an idiot, Dream-"

"Why would he? He's not even who I thought he was."

"Huh?" Sapnap frowned and Dream turned away, cursing himself. "What is that supposed to mean?"

"Sap... Let's just drop it."

"No, tell me! Tell me, Dream, tell me. Tell me-" Sapnap whined incessantly, tugging at Dream's cloak with a spring in his step.

"Fine! God, you're such a-" Dream cut himself off, scoffing at the triumphant smirk on Sapnap's

face. The childish look brought him back to the simpler days of exploring and fooling around.

Before he could get swept up in nostalgia, Dream sucked in a breath.

"Sapnap, there's something I need to tell you about that day with the storm."

Sapnap frowned, searching through his memories until realization dawned on his face. "Oh! That day where we were returning from Lord Techno's estate and the waves almost swept the crew off-board?"

"I think you mean the day on which I saved your sorry ass, but yeah." Dream smiled at Sapnap's indignant squawk, but his mood sobered as he continued. "On that day, I was sure I was going to die. The ocean was way too strong for a normal storm and I was pulled way down with the currents. But before it got too bad, someone pulled me to shore and left me on the beach." Dream was pacing now, his boots clicking against the stone ground like a ticking clock.

"Who saved you?" Sapnap's eyes trailed Dream, skittering nervously to examine the ocean's waves, which glimmered like roiling sheets of obsidian under the moonlight.

"I have no idea. But..." Dream stopped short as hazy images shot through his mind. Two pink lips turned down in a worried frown. Wide brown eyes, glinting with amber streaks in the golden sun. The resounding splash as they retreated to the ocean's shifting teal waves. Then, darkness.

He faced the truth directly, for the first time. It had always been a whisper at the back of his mind, an annoying voice he just couldn't shake.

"Dream?"

"I thought-" Dream breathed heavily, running a hand down his face. His fingers caught on the scratched surface of his mask and he tore it off, feeling the cool touch of air on his cheeks. "It was George," He finished lamely, his fingers stinging at his sides.

"Isn't that... perfect?"

"No, Sap, because he's not." Dream was back to pacing, his thoughts a tangle of disappointment. "George almost drowned tonight in the lake. He couldn't be the person who saved me, and that's fine- it's realistic and obvious, but..."

"But you're disappointed," Sapnap finished, offering Dream an understanding nod.

Dream bit his lip, turning his gaze away to the dark sky above. Heavy clouds masked the winking stars, hanging in the sky ominously. The ocean still raged below, though not as heartily as the night before. That was good. He'd be setting sail the next morning, as tradition told him, to receive the official title of King at sea. What was he doing? He should be preparing, not... not whatever he was doing at the moment.

Though when he tried to steer his mind to his inevitable duties, a gorgeous smile filled his head, joined by a laugh so light and free like the ringing of small bells.

"Dream," A steady hand clapped down on his shoulder, grounding him suddenly in reality. Sapnap looked towards him, his eyes shining with sincerity. "That's a perfectly normal reaction, you don't have to get down on yourself. It's fine." He cocked his head then, a single point in his jaw pulsing. "What's not fine, is that you've been avoiding him."

Dream snapped his head up, meeting Sapnap's eyes with a scowl.

"Oh, don't give me that look you baby," Sapnap shoved Dream's shoulder teasingly, sending him stumbling back. "But you know I'm right. The last thing you should be doing right now is sulking outside and almost decapitating your best soldier."

"Oh, so we're joking about that now?" Dream mumbled sheepishly and Sapnap rolled his eyes.

"Wouldn't be the first time you've tried to kill me-" He added offhandedly before continuing, "Dream, you have to talk to George."

"I- Sapnap, I can't."

"Dream, I mean this completely supportively but you're being such an idiot. Just go to his room, I'm sure he'd be more than willing to-"

Dream shook his head, tuning Sapnap out. "What I *have* to do, Sapnap, is get ready for tomorrow. This..."

He glanced up at George's window, his grimace softening at the darkness of his room. Perhaps the healers had finally left the boy to rest. Perhaps that meant he was okay, that he'd be back to normal the next morning and Dream would never have to feel his heart explode with fear like it had hours prior. Maybe he'd have the courage to take George's hands in his and finally, finally- He shut down the thought before it fostered too much hope in his mind.

Catching his friend's pursed lips, Dream tore his gaze away from the window and turned away from the sea. "This can all wait until later."

Ignoring Sapnap's vehement protests, Dream traipsed back to the castle, slotting his mask against his face.

Numbly, as he scaled the winding stairs up to his quarters, he wondered, what would his parents think of him?

...

Deep down, past the darkening halls of the castle above, the ocean waves crashed against the stone walls. The spray of salt and specks of water glinted in the air, carried by the swift wind high up to the castle where dreams and nightmares grew rowdy in the rooms of many.

Unbeknownst to the sleeping royals above, a twisting shadow crept across the water. The waves seemed to still for a moment and the winds paused their hallowing tune. The ocean went silent for a single, disturbing moment.

The waves parted in fright as two ram's horns emerged from the depths of the glimmering ocean. A colossal figure stepped out of the waves, their hooved feet pressing into the dark sand. Their eyes dragged across the beach until they locked onto the coiling spirals of the castle above, and a chilling grin crept across their face.

"Well," a deep hum spread across the still waves, escalating quickly into a thundering laugh. "That was pretty easy."

Chapter End Notes

Hello again!! I hope everyone is staying safe during these trying times <33

Sorry for the delay for this chapter - my internet went haywire yesterday and we're still not entirely sure if it's been fixed yet, but fingers are crossed.

I hope you all enjoyed reading that as much as I loved writing it!! My goodness that boat scene was a brain killer to write but I really like how it turned out, especially with that ending *evil cackling fades into the distance*

Unfortunately, I don't think I'll have time to write up and post the next chapter for a while because school started ramping up again and responsibilities are piling up on me ;-; (not to mention my plans for the next chapter all currently all over the place but shhh...)

I hope this chapter will sate you all for a bit ('twas extra long too <33)

As always, thanks to my lovely beta and amazing friend C_l_o_v_e, who has miraculously managed to keep me sane and always manages to bring my mood up :)) She has a couple of amazing works on the MCYT fandom- particularly some amazing Wilbur and Techno fics, and I highly recommend giving them a read! (I really love her latest one, I'll link it here for anyone who is interested:
<https://archiveofourown.org/works/27261484>)

Anyway, stay safe everyone, and thanks if you got this far in the notes :)) Reading your comments always makes my day and I love hearing what you think, even if you want to yell at me <33 (with love of course - hopefully)

I'll see you all in the next chapter! :D

To The Rescue

Chapter Summary

"Who are you?" Dream hissed, his whole body tensed like a panther set to strike.

Schlatt's eyes, which seemed to glimmer like a kaleidoscope, widened in amusement. He hummed, cocking his head at Dream. "Interesting."

"Come dawn," Schlatt murmured, and George snapped his head up to see a slow grin growing on the mer's lips. "You'll know me as the ruler," Schlatt chuckled, dragging the point of his sword against the wood. "The emperor of this great country."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The sun's rays filtered into the room through the billowing curtains, splashing George in a patch of welcoming, bright light. Visions of surging waves and starry skies lit up with the smiling moon were blinked away by the quickly awakening boy.

Lazily, he propped himself up against the headboard, catching sight of the sun shining high in the sky. George watched the grey rays shine down as his thoughts began to filter through his head. It was his third day on land. His last day. By sundown today, he had to kiss Dream and live as a human forevermore. The daunting thought made his bones shake as he swung his legs off of the bed, dragging his weary body over to the window.

Phantom pains raked through him, bringing forth a choppy torrent of memories. George winced as he remembered the lake, specifically the rush of water filling his lungs to the brim until they were balloons just waiting to burst.

Everything was hazy after that. He knew Dream had saved him- who else would have? But he couldn't remember reaching the castle, let alone the journey there.

Seagulls cawed obnoxiously from their perch on the castle spires, and George leaned out on the balcony to catch a glimpse of the kingdom, basking in the light of a new day.

Skittering past the unsettled sea, George turned his attention to the blocky huts and builds that made up the village center, admiring the beauty of the expansive land. He spotted a large mass

docked at the port and squinted against the harsh sun, trying to decipher what it could be.

He determined it was a large boat, built out of dark wood with embellishments that twinkled with the unmistakable shine of gold. George could spy several figures bustling around the deck, including the uniformed servants of the castle. Snowy white masts were raised high above the busy figures and the anchor was reeled in and slung over the wooden deck.

A figure stepped out towards the stern of the ship, their cloak billowing around them in the wind.

George's heart stopped. His hands gripped the balcony bars tighter and he pushed himself further out until he was hanging precariously over the sheer drop down to the courtyard.

The figure strode across the ship until they reached the very front. An armored man walked up next to him and they jostled shoulders, the armored figure gesturing animatedly. The cloaked figure doubled over in a laugh and George's chest flared with a twinge of pain.

That was Dream.

Dream was on the boat, with that figure in shining armor - Sapnap, George realized with a jolt- at his side.

The glow of fireflies flashed around him, joined by the low croaks of bullfrogs resting on lily pads. Knees knocked against him as a tense voice told him softly, "I'm crowned King tomorrow."

The memory struck George suddenly and he stumbled back into the shadows of his room. The backs of his legs hit his bed and he sat down heavily, his hands gripping the thick sheets. Dream's voice faded from his head as quickly as it had come, but the effects were lasting.

Dream was crowned King today. And he had left George alone at the castle.

George scowled fiercely as flashes of betrayal and hurt ran through him, picking at his skin in angry pinches. He felt stupid, for a painful moment, as he remembered their boat ride. Dream's hands on his, his heavy stare, reflecting the light of the stars, his eyes slotting shut as he leaned forward-

"Stop it," He groaned to himself, pressing the heels of his palms against his eyes as if he could tear the visions from his eyes.

The brief respite gave him a moment of shocking clarity.

If Dream left that morning for the ceremony, he wouldn't be back until the late evening. George would miss his chance- his only shot, at becoming human. He'd be Schlatt's servant for the rest of eternity, and he'd never see Dream again.

Adrenaline crashed through him and George scrambled up, his eyes flitting to the docked ship. He grabbed his satchel, which lay by his bedside table, and rushed out the door, ignoring the twinges of pain ricocheting through his sore muscles.

George ran with the wind to his back, tasting the salt in the air while heavy breaths tore through him. His legs carried him down the stairs, past the desolate halls, and out the palace doors. The halls were silent. George sprinted down the winding path to the village docks, barely managing to keep a leash on his unraveling thoughts. Jumping and skittering down the rocky path, George was filled with panic.

The dock came into view and a burst of speed propelled him through the busy streets. George dodged past villagers and tradesmen; his wide eyes fixed on the hulking form of the ship.

He made it onto the dock, his feet crashing down on the wooden planks, reminding him faintly of the waves slapping against the Grotto walls. The sound echoed through him as he stumbled down the expanse, dodging busy fishermen and sailors catching a break before their next departure.

The impressive mass of the ship towered over him, so close. His legs flew him to the ship, springing on pockets of air as he reached his arm out to the ship, his mouth opening to inhale, his brain forming a cry of-

The ship's horn blared and George's hands clamped down on his ears, the breath knocked out of him. His legs dropped to the ground, their wings cut abruptly.

The ship began to move.

George scrambled forward on dead limbs, reaching the end of the dock as the ship surged on

through the waters despite his cries.

"Dream!" George screamed over the seagulls calling. The waves crashed against the shore, slapping his cries down into the maw of the relentless sea. Ocean mist sprayed over his face tauntingly, icy and sharp.

"Dream, please!" He tried again, his voice fracturing.

The ship was too far out by now, George knew. Dream wouldn't hear him. He had missed his chance.

"Dream," The word left him in a shattered whisper, hanging in the air. "What-" He shuddered, feeling traitorous tears burn his eyes. "What am I supposed to do now?"

"George!"

At the sharp call of his name, George whirled around, hope bursting within him like a firecracker. His eyes darted over the sandy shores, widening as he spotted a glimpse of black fins flicking through the water before they were submerged in the glassy waves once more.

He frowned, staring at the winding water as it lapped against the dock.

Was that- no, no way. He wouldn't show his face after-

"Big man!" An obnoxiously bright voice hissed at him and George felt hot fury shoot to his stomach, swirling like bubbling lava.

He leaped off the dock onto the sandy shores, landing on the soft specks with a dull thud. Scrambling through the sand, George ran to the ocean's edge, his pack bouncing at his side.

"Over here!" A voice called out and George spotted a pale hand flicking to the rocky coves of the beach, set off to one side. The hand plunged back into the water and George clenched his fists tight at his hips.

Storming up to the cove, George couldn't stop the torrent of words from bursting out, boiling over in his thin patience.

"I can't believe this. You're-" George scoffed, bright and angry. "You're actually an idiot."

Tommy had the gall to look offended, floating in the water with those sea speckled eyes narrowed at George. Tubbo swam beside him, scratching at the sleek black fins sprouting from his arms.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on there big man-" Tommy started, his hands up in mock peace.

"This was my last day, Tommy!" George jabbed a finger at the boy, who winced. "You ruined it! Dream is out there in the middle of the ocean and I have no way to get there."

Tommy sputtered, inhaling quickly. "George, my friend, calm down-"

"Calm down?" George hissed, taking a heavy step towards the nervous boy. "Schlatt will make me his *slave*, Tommy. Because of you-"

"Hell, would you just shut up and *listen* !" Tommy burst out, his icy eyes smoldering with frustration.

The outburst stole George's next thoughts from his head, and the moment was all Tommy needed to continue.

"We've left Schlatt. We're no longer his... helpers." George scoffed at that, but Tommy bolstered on. "Tubbo and I agreed - we're done with him, Big G."

Shaking his head, George fixed his pointed glare on both of the boys. "Why should I trust you? You almost *killed* me!"

Tommy winced and George's frown wavered as Tubbo shrunk back, wilting under the weight of the words.

"That was never our intention," Tubbo whispered, speaking for the first time. His wide brown eyes glistened with regret and George felt his traitorous heart clench at the sight.

"Schlatt's planning something for today, George."

Tommy's words jolted him out of his daze and George turned to him. "What?" The confused exclaim lay quiet in the air for a long moment.

"Schlatt, he's-" Tommy shuddered, his face waxy and pale. "He's unhinged, George. The color you gave him was enough to let him see things again. Being confined to that cave for decades it's... it's done some things to his brain-"

"So you're saying he's crazy," George raised an eyebrow. "We been knew-"

Tommy rolled his eyes, snapping out, "No, what I'm *trying* to say-"

"He's going to kill Dream."

George stopped short. His heart plunged to his stomach like a puppet with its strings cut. His blood froze over, ice running through his veins in a painful shock.

"What?" He whispered, his eyes locked on Tubbo's grim face.

"That's his master plan. He's going to kill Dream and take his place at the coronation. With his sight back, he has the ability. He already had the power," Tubbo added in a smaller voice, shoulders hunched forward like a skeleton.

"Then I need to get to him," George gasped, his eyes already searching the glaring horizon for the form of the ship. The ocean winked coldly at him, dousing him in sprays of freezing droplets.

"You won't be able to do it alone." Tommy set his eyes on George, squaring his shoulders and puffing his chest out almost cartoonish.

"Why would you-" George struggled with the words. Everything was falling apart- his perfect glass world was crumbling to sand in his palms and all he could do was cup his hands around the fragments and pray the wind wouldn't scatter the pieces too far.

"Schlatt has manipulated us for too long," Tommy spoke somberly. The dark tone was off-putting, the wane frown on those pink lips unnatural.

Tommy wasn't meant to look so worn, George thought numbly.

"It's high time we find our own family," Tommy knocked a fist into Tubbo's shoulder with a wavering smile. "One that actually cares."

Tubbo smiled at that, his eyes clearing up the tiniest bit.

They had betrayed him, George thought as he watched the two boys exchange grins. They had left him to drown in the lake and they had ruined the chance he had with Dream. By all and any means, Tubbo and Tommy were the last people he should be trusting. So why was he about to do this?

"Okay."

Tommy's head snapped up at the word and his wide eyes shot to George.

"Let's do this."

A brilliant smile broke out on Tommy's pink lips, revealing teeth like pearls as the boy let out a high pitched laugh.

"Alright Big G! I knew you were cool, Tubbo didn't I tell you he was cool?"

George let the boy run his mouth, steeling himself as he looked out at the dull waters. Somehow, despite the war brewing on the horizon, George found himself smiling on at the wreckage.

...

"This was a *horrible* idea!" George screamed over the howl of the wind, his chin arched high towards the morose skies to avoid the waves lapping at his throat. "Tommy you're an *idiot* ! I cannot believe I followed two *children* into a storm as a *human* ." George punctuated each word with a spit as he coughed out the salty tears of the sea.

Tommy, on his left side, dragged him forward, ignoring his screams yet again.

Tubbo at least gave him an apologetic smile as they pulled him through the icy water, bobbing along the harsher crests.

Fighting to keep his legs kicking and trying his hardest not to swear at two minors, George focused on the sun gleaming in the sky like a beacon amongst the dark clouds. It was past midafternoon and the Sun was growing tired on its course to its bed on the horizon.

A sudden surge of water crashed into the trio and George coughed harshly as water shot up his nose and through his mouth, salty and vile. His hand flew to his chest, fingers scrabbling at the thick leather band of his bag strap, still secure at his side. George let out a sigh of relief as he recollected himself.

At the pace they were going, George was sure of one thing. They would never make it to Dream's ship by sunset.

"Tommy!" George yelled again, tugging his arm out of Tommy's white-knuckled grip. "Tommy, listen to me-"

"Would you just sh-" Tommy inhaled sharply, swallowing his words - a wise decision, George thought wryly. "What?" He settled on as he hissed at George.

"We're never going to make it like this," George coughed wetly, blinking salt out of his blurry vision. "You need to go and get my father and my brothers. Tell them where I am, and make sure they bring all their soldiers."

Tommy set his bewildered gaze on him, those bright blue eyes wide in disbelief. "George, we can't just leave you here-"

"Believe me, I don't want you to," George smiled wanly. He knew it didn't reach his eyes. He knew the boys saw it too. "But you have to."

"No, Big G, I mean we really can't. You're going to die-" Tommy sputtered and even George cracked a delirious smile at the boy.

"This is the best shot we've got at this point, Tommy. You and Tubbo go - I won't separate the two of you."

Tommy faltered briefly at that before he opened his mouth to argue. George landed a heavy hand on his shoulder, stopping him before he could begin. In the midst of the storm, it was hard to see or hear much, but George knew Tommy would understand.

"Tell them I'm sorry," George spoke firmly, his gaze darting between Tubbo and Tommy in the grey expanse of the sea. "And tell them-" George swallowed thickly, feeling his eyes burn at the sudden heat of scalding tears forming. "Tell them I love them."

To his relief, Tommy set his jaw and gave him a sharp nod, his eyes narrowed in determination. In a flash of black fins, he saluted George before pulling Tubbo down into the darkening depths.

Now George was alone in the depths of the sea, trying to keep his mind off of the chilling cold seeping into his bones. Setting his eyes on the scope of the ocean before him, he swam forward, choking down the bitterness of his human form. He had missed his tail before, when on land, because of superficial reasons. Now, he felt foolish for missing his tail for its beauty and not its use.

If he didn't get to the boat in time-

Horrible visions of Dream sinking through red-tinted water filled his mind, and George groaned, feeling the unmistakable prickle of fear and panic hit his eyes.

His salty tears melted into the ocean waves as George swam on, pushing himself past his limits until the sea threatened to consume him in its rolling wrath.

He was pulled down by the weight of the water, feeling his energy being pulled out of him like an unraveling thread. Just when he thought he might not come up to the surface again, a strong blare of noise shot through the air, strangely musical in its brassy timbre.

George whipped his head around in the midst of the water, suddenly on high alert.

"What?" He croaked, his eyes blown wide in panic, and dare he say- hope?

The musical sound thundered once more, and George threw himself against the current to see-

A ship.

No, George realized with mounting excitement. *The* ship.

The hulking structure of wood and steel cut through the choppy waters smoothly, a beast of impressive size and quality. George had never seen one of man's ships so close to him. From where he bobbed in the sea, he could make the glint of the dark cannons hidden in the hull of the ship, and the glow of the lanterns strung above the deck. The snowy masts flapped in the wind, pooling together to guide the ship onwards.

George was transfixed.

Musicians with trumpets stood at the helm, dressed cordially in their best robes. George could spot several figures mulling aboard the deck, glittering in the comfortable weight of silk robes and teary gems.

And standing at the forefront of them all -

George swallowed a broken sob as he watched Dream glide across the ship, his bone-white mask hung over his face. His dark cloaks billowed around him, and though George could only see the grays and dull blues of the world, he knew Dream was swathed in gorgeous green.

The musicians blasted their trumpets once more, and then lowered their instruments, the explosive song finally finished. George let out a strained cry as the ship continued on its path, slipping away into the distance.

The waters grew dark and hazy around him, and George startled at the sudden change. Looking down, he could only see the ominous shadows of creatures below, rising to the ocean surface. Something had beckoned them to the skies of the sea, George thought as he turned in sharp circles, watching his back.

A long stretch of darkness shot through the waters, and George caught a glimpse of the figure with a terrified gasp.

The shadow was massive and spotted the ocean's blue like black blood. It streaked through the waters like a lithe shark, shooting past George without notice. Worst of all, George was sure he had seen a curling pair of ram's horns twisting up from the shadow's front. And it was heading straight to the boat.

"Schlatt," George cried out, tearing through the seas. "Schlatt, get *back* !" He screamed, to no avail.

His arm was suddenly bound to his side by the twisting leather straps of his satchel, and with a furious cry, George ripped the bag from his shoulder. The flap whipped open and George fell silent.

Reaching a shaking hand into the depths of the satchel, his fingers curled around something gelatinous and round. Something charged with power.

George let the satchel slip down into the darkening ocean as he lifted the treasure to his eyes. His breath seeped out of him in an instant as he held the dark orb to his face. Glimmering particles danced around the orb, which flashed mysteriously with an unknown strength.

Setting his eyes on the steadily distancing ship, George felt the whisper of the wind curl around him, slipping into his ears with a ghostly voice. Winding his arm back in the uncertain seas, George took a steady breath, pressing his frozen lips together tightly. Then, with a true cry, he let the orb fly from his fingertips, watching as it arced through the golden sky.

For a dreaded second, George watched the orb fall short, so close to the ship's edge, but not nearly close enough to reach the deck. Then, by some miracle, the wind picked up sharply, whipping the orb up into the warm glow of the ship.

What happened next was a blur.

George was flailing against the water's rough pull, gasping for enough air to keep afloat in the treacherous sea. He watched with dull eyes as the pearl-like orb fell to the deck. Then, he was lurching forward through the air.

The world around him was a cloud of shimmering dark blue particles, disorienting him wildly. He fell forward in his blind daze and gasped in surprise as his knees clacked harshly against solid wooden planks beneath him.

Exclamations of surprise and fear rang out all around him and George swung his head up to meet the eyes of a large group of nobles. They stared down in shock at the shivering, sodden boy on the deck who had appeared seemingly out of nowhere.

The nobles around him stepped back, as if he was cursed, leaving George to stand his ground in a wide, barren circle. All eyes were on him now. All sound ceased, except the high trills of the wind, which blew the masts around them in a frenzied state of excitement.

George realized with a rush of elation that he had made it onto the ship. Adrenaline rushed through him, pushing the paralyzing cold he had come to accept out of his body. He had a chance! A bubbly laugh almost escaped his chest as a heady feeling filled his mind. It had been a long shot, especially with sending Tommy and Tubbo away to get his father. He didn't know how far out they were, just that he had beaten Schlatt to the boat. He could save himself from Schlatt, and he could save-

" *George ?* " A loud voice called sharply, snapping him from his thoughts immediately. He stumbled to his feet, ignoring the way his whole body shook at the forced movement. He knew that voice. He *knew* that voice -

"Dream," He gasped, tears flowing freely down his cheeks. George took a step forward, nearly falling into the arms that engulfed him. A harrowing sob rattled his chest as Dream held him close. Intoxicating warmth spread through him like a forest on fire. "You're okay," He choked on the words, finally looking up at Dream.

"George, where did you come from?" Dream asked in a harsh whisper. The mask covered his eyes and George barely resisted the temptation to rip it off. "You're freezing," Dream murmured, reaching up to his neck to unclasp the hooks of his cloak.

George felt a smile curl up his lips as he looked up at that mask, watching the glowing sky behind them. His eyes flickered back to Dream and in a moment, his relief shattered.

Two ram's horns spiraled up from behind Dream's head as a figure clawed his way up to the ship's deck, undetected in the frenzy of their reunion. George caught the wicked gleam of metal as Schlatt rose from the sea, a long blade gripped in his hooved hand.

"Watch out!" George screamed, knowing too well that it was too little, too late. Schlatt swung the sword down in a gruesome arc, a wide smile stretching his cheeks.

George pulled Dream towards him immediately, closing his eyes instinctively and bracing for the cruel cut of the sword.

Instead, a grunt and a heavy clash of metal sounded out. George opened his eyes in shock to see a boy standing before them, blocking Schlatt's sword with a gleaming blade of polished iron. The tail ends of his white bandana, tucked under dark locks, flapped in the wind like pale serpents.

"Sapnap!" George gasped as Dream shot up, his diamond blade already nestled in his grip securely.

A squeal of metal screeched in the silence as Sapnap dragged Schlatt's blade down. "Why 'ello there Georgie!" Sapnap turned and shot a grin at him, his dark eyes blazing with vigor. "Fancy seeing you here!"

Schlatt growled and the entire ship seemed to tremble. His sword shot up once more, clashing against Sapnap's blade with an almighty crash. This time, the Captain was shoved back, stumbling to regain his footing at the forceful parry. Brandishing the sword at the crowd, Schlatt bared his teeth in a chilling scowl. The nobles scrambled back, many ushered down into the belly of the ship for safety. A knight tried to pull Dream in, but the Prince yanked his shoulder out of the hold forcefully.

Despite the warning, George stepped forward. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Dream take a hasty step to stop him, but George wasn't paying attention. His eyes were set on the coiling nautilus shell hung around Schlatt's neck. It glowed with all the colors in existence, a dizzying sight

of pure, unadulterated beauty. Those were his colors, George realized with a boiling fury.

"Ah, look who it is!" Schlatt crowed, craning his head down to meet George's eyes. "The little colorblind prince, who gave up everything for a shot at true love!"

Low murmuring sounded out between the cowering nobles and George felt a scarlet rush fill his cheeks. He glared readily at Schlatt, refusing to meet Dream's eyes.

The boy in question stood beside him, his sword brandished low and out in front of George.

"Who are you?" Dream hissed, his whole body tensed like a panther set to strike.

Schlatt's eyes, which seemed to glimmer like a kaleidoscope, widened in amusement. He hummed, cocking his head at Dream. "Interesting." The man lifted himself past the ridge of the ship's edge, flipping his massive tail over onto the deck.

Several of the guards gasped and all of them unsheathed their swords. George winced at the reaction, his eyes tracking over the slick frills of Schlatt's dark tail.

This ruined everything. George's eyes flickered nervously over the aghast faces surrounding him. His stomach churned in sickening cycles as he watched Sarnap's skin drain of blood, his eyes tracking over Schlatt's form.

Truly, George shouldn't have been so surprised. Humans were just as strange to him as merfolk were to the humans, he imagined. But as his wary gaze fell on the horrified humans, a terrible understanding dawned upon him. They were scared. Disgusted, even. George looked down at his human legs, feeling unstable on the long stilts. What was so much better about legs?

"Come dawn," Schlatt murmured, and George snapped his head up to see a slow grin growing on the mer's lips. "You'll know me as the ruler," Schlatt chuckled, dragging the point of his sword against the wood. "The *emperor* of this great country."

Outraged murmurs erupted from the remaining nobles and George grimaced, watching out of the corner of his eye as Sarnap took a step forward, his sword clenched tight in his white-knuckled fist.

"Oh really?" Dream laughed, and George could practically see his fine eyebrow raised high above his narrowed eyes.

"That's funny," Dream continued, his sword swaying in his loose grip like a glittering pendulum. "You're speaking to the *King* ."

Almost too fast to register, Dream snapped his wrist up, the blade winking devilishly in the fading sun as the tip threatened to cut into Schlatt's jaw.

Schlatt laughed at that, looking down the length of the sword with uninterested eyes. "Oh, don't get ahead of yourself. I know you haven't been crowned yet. You're just as powerless as *he* is on land." Schlatt drawled, his cunning eyes landing on George.

George took an unsteady step back as Schlatt fixed his gaze solely on him. Schlatt's flashing eyes seemed to snare him, trapping him where he stood.

"How *have* you been, George? Have you tricked your prince into falling in love with you yet? Have you changed at all from your selfish self? Have you *kissed* him yet?" Schlatt cackled and George burned with embarrassment.

"Will you just *shut up* ?" He yelled, the air suddenly charged with suffocating heat.

Dream's wrist fell, bobbing his sword down. He turned to George, who opened his mouth unsurely - some excuse had to fall from his lips, some words to sate the confusion filling the silence between them-

There was a flash of movement and George turned, catching the daunting sight of Schlatt's twinkling eyes too late.

Dream's cry cut off terribly as Schlatt's clawed hand swung out and grabbed George's shirt, yanking him back towards the mer roughly.

"George!"

He was slammed against a wall of toughened skin, knocking the breath from his lungs unexpectedly. A horrible tightness squeezed at his throat, making him wheeze suddenly as Schlatt's hand shot to his neck.

"Don't move," He hissed directly into his ear and George shivered, chest spasming with contained coughs.

That moment of hesitation had cost him everything.

George knew there wouldn't be a peaceful way out of this. Schlatt wanted the throne, power, and the country to his name and he already had George's colors to get him there. George felt a terrible sob wracking through his chest. If he hadn't given Schlatt his sight - if he had swallowed his heartbreak and gone back to the palace after the destruction of his Grotto, none of this would have happened. Schlatt would be confined to his cave, blind, and Dream would be peacefully King of the beautiful nation. And George would be under the sea.

Yet, somehow, even though the guilty thoughts ran rampant through his mind, one look at Dream made them disappear. Selfishly, he forgot all of it.

Dream's mask was shoved up the side of his face, nested haphazardly in those sandy toned locks. One of his eyes was visible, narrowed under the full curve of his eyebrow. His jaw pulsed tightly and George could see the veins in his neck trailing down past the folds of his cloak.

God, he was beautiful.

Faintly, George felt the rumbling of Schlatt's voice coiling in the air, but his ears couldn't catch a single word. All he could hear was a dull hum, so prevalent it was almost as if there was a voice calling out to him.

The hum reached out to him and George subtly turned his gaze to the side. His eyes widened as they landed on the tantalizing coil of the nautilus shell hanging right by his ear. The shell rested atop Schlatt's grey skin peacefully, shifting colors rapidly in the darkening sky.

"Now," Schlatt growled, adjusting his grip on George's neck so that his nails dug pointedly into his fluttering flesh. George grimaced and tore his gaze away from the shell- from his colors. "Where is that crown of mine?"

George swallowed as he met Dream's mask, willing him not to do it.

His dry lips parted and a frail sound crept out, "Don't-"

"Shut it." Schlatt's fingers squeezed brutally and George gasped in pain, feeling electricity shoot down his back in a paralyzing jolt. He writhed in Schlatt's vice grip but it was useless. Black spots grew in his vision, spotting his head like clouds covering stars.

"Stop!" Dream yelled, jolting George from his pained daze. He watched with tear-filled eyes as Dream sheathed his sword and threw his hands up in a hasty surrender. "Stop, just- " He took a deep, shuddering breath and flicked his gaze to Schlatt's eyes. "I'll give up my title, just don't kill him."

George groaned, but Schlatt's deep chuckle swallowed it whole. "Wonderful," He drawled, his grip on George's neck faltering.

There was only one way out of this George thought as Dream instructed Sapnap to get the crown.

Schlatt had one advantage - a crucial tool that George had foolishly given him. If he managed to destroy that thing, Schlatt could be stopped easily. The sun above was fading fast, a dying man bleeding colors into the sky. He didn't have much time.

George inhaled softly, concentrating on Schlatt's hand. His fingers were still on his neck, but if George moved fast enough-

He could do it.

Schlatt drawled on in that smooth voice of his, but George let the world around him fall away piece by piece. He was suspended in air, surrounded only by darkness but for the inviting glow of the shell beside him.

The clicks of footsteps resounded on the ship as Sapnap walked up with the gleaming crown in his hands, his steps slow and his eyes ablaze with anger. His hands gripped the sides of the crown mercilessly, and George knew the jewels had to be cutting into his palms. Sapnap didn't seem to

care as he stalked down the ship. Watching him now, George could see the emotion pouring out of the Captain of the Guard. It was transfixing and lit a flame of determination in George's chest.

Sapnap reached Schlatt, casting one regretful look back at Dream, who gave him a curt nod. The crown prince's hands were clenched at his sides, but he didn't wield his sword.

Schlatt grinned and bowed his head slightly, waiting for Sapnap to crown him.

It was now or never.

George lifted a trembling hand and flexed his sore fingers. Time seemed to slow momentarily as his eyes darted to Dream. He watched as Dream's mouth opened, but before he could call out to George, he was moving.

George's hand shot out like a whip cracking through the air, and he ripped the shell from Schlatt's chest, the spider silk string snapping with a sharp twang.

Schlatt leaped back on instinct, but George was already on the move. The shell clasped tightly in his hand, he darted across the deck. Schlatt's heavy hand clawed down his back, shredding his shirt and digging into his back painfully, but George flung himself down.

"Dream!" He screamed, rolling over clumsily and tossing the shell over his head.

It twisted through the air, a glowing ball of alluring colors, the center of everyone's attention. With a great cry, Dream leaped up almost too high to be humanly possible, snatching the shell midair.

"Break it!" George yelled and Dream wasted no time hurling the fragile shell to the deck.

A horrible howl sounded out as Dream's boot slammed down into the shell, shattering it on the ship's floor.

George watched in amazement as six orbs of color erupted from the fragments on the ground. Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Violet swarmed around him like old friends, greeting him with their vibrancy.

George stretched out his hand toward the colors, an elated smile cracking his lips. Reaching hungrily, he swiped Yellow and Orange quickly. Immediately, the sky snapped into color, exploding with hues of daisy yellows and tangerine orange. The swinging lanterns above glowed tones of sunshine and warmth, casting everyone in their encompassing light. The sight brought tears to his eyes.

Frantically, George reached out for Blue and Violet, crying out as the sky filled out, a mass of whirling blue above him. The ocean below was finally normal, inviting, and playful with its shifting cerulean waves. It beckoned him forth with its beauty, calling out to him like a traveler finally home.

Red and Green danced like sprites in front of his eyes and he laughed, his fingers clasp onto the colors.

A sudden mass smashed into his side, and George could barely gasp before he was sailing through the air and crashing into the side of the mast. A brilliant white flash rolled through his head, accompanied quickly by an explosion of pain. Forcing his eyes open, George cried out.

Schlatt's hulking form stood before him, two orbs of color gripped tightly in his hands. The colors flashed all too bright before they disappeared, winking out from existence like stars snuffed out.

A deep laugh built up in the shocked silence, rising with the crash of waves. Two eyes gleamed at George in the partial hues of the sunset, one a fiery, brilliant red and the other a dark, swirling green. Schlatt turned his head up to the sky, his twisting horns dipping behind his head. A crazed grin flashed across his face as he fixed those multicolored eyes on George.

"Oh, Prince," He whispered, his voice seeming to echo around George. "Looks like your time has run out."

George's eyes widened and he scrambled up, his heart thundering against his bones.

It couldn't be time, George couldn't think like that. He still had time, Schlatt was just trying to stall for as long as possible. Blood rushed through his head, darkening his vision as he watched the final rays of the sun slip over the edge of the world.

"No," George gasped as Schlatt erupted in growing cackles.

"Better get in the water George!" Schlatt crowed and George turned to him, his heart plunging into the acid churning in his stomach.

The boat rocked harshly and he fell against the mast, gripping onto the wood for purchase as he slid down to the wet deck.

There was a brilliant flash of blue and George watched in horror as scales spotted over his skin, tearing through the dark fabric of his pants. Nausea and pain flared through him as his legs fused together, shooting scales up his thighs to his hips. Glimmering fins fanned over the deck, replacing feet with frills of blue.

Fearful tears clouding his vision, George looked up to Schlatt, desperate pleas building up on his tongue like blood pooling. But instead of Schlatt's twinkling eyes, George found himself staring straight at Dream.

Dream, whose eyes were blown wide in panic and confusion, trailing his gaze over George's form with unadulterated horror.

"Dream-" George tried weakly, but the word died on his lips as Dream took a faltering step back, his hands flying to the pommel of his sword.

And as he tracked those deep, alluring eyes, George realized one, horrible truth.

Dream was scared of him.

And with that, he felt his heart shatter.

...

Hello everyone, I hope you all are doing well!

Now that the greetings have been said - it is time for me to bow my head in shame and apologize endlessly for taking sO. LONG. with this chapter :/

To be 100% honest, these past two weeks have been rough. It's been extremely hard for me to stay motivated and happy and I put off writing this chapter until most of the things causing me stress were done, like tests. It doesn't help that in the country that I'm living in currently, we're experiencing new waves of covid cases reaching the thousands and my school isn't fully online. All that in mind, I finally found a chance to write and cranked out this chapter within a few hours, which was kinda crazy because it's one of the longer ones.

That being said, I'm not entirely happy with this chapter because of how rushed it is, but I was glad to get the chance to write and get it out of my system! :)) Thank you to my lovely friend Clove, who kept me alive during the week with her wonderful stories and plague doctor jokes - very random I know but I love her so much.

And if you made it past all of that ^^ I just wanted to thank you for supporting me and this fic <3 everyone - and I mean every one of you glorious simps - has been so kind and welcoming and has made writing this story so much more fun.

I hope to see everyone again soon for what I believe will be the final chapter of this fic!

Drink lots of water and try not to stay up too late simping (I know it's hard)

<3 <3 <3

Fireworks

Chapter Summary

White noise flooded Dream's ears, blurring everything around him as realization crashed into him full force. The painful bullet of shock lodged into his heart melted into a venomous mix of disbelief, hurt, and pure, hot anger.

"Do you understand now, Prince?" Schlatt's deep voice echoed in his head, bouncing off the broken thoughts running through him. "He's done nothing but lie to you, just so that he could have a little fun."

Chapter Notes

TW for lots of blood, descriptions of injury, flashbacks to drowning.

If you are sensitive to any of these, please consider your safety and wellbeing before reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He was fumbling through darkness, lungs burning as liquid tore through him, stinging his eyes and shocking his limbs. It was all so cold. The grip of the storm hauled him away, faint screams lingering in ringing ears. Spots mottled his vision, flecks of darkness in a hailstorm of black ocean. He was drowning.

The current seemed physical now, dragging him up in hefts. There was something tight across his chest, lifting him up from under his arms, like a twine of sailor's rope. It was almost as though someone was pulling him up through the abyss, the world around shifting from a suffocating black to blue-greys.

He broke the surface, he thinks. He could feel the icy wind on his face, the specks of seawater dancing across his frozen lips. His back hit solid ground, the misty rain splattering down on him. Someone was definitely with him. He could hear them breathing.

A weight slumped down on his chest and he cracked open an eye, shutting it almost instantly as the light struck his brain in a sharp jab. Sapphire spun behind his eyes, and he could have sworn he had seen a flash of blue fins spanning across the grey sand.

The person withdrew and he groaned as he felt bile bubble up in his throat. Turning to hack out his lungs, he looked up through teary eyes at the retreating figure before him, blurred terribly by his stinging eyes.

His lips parted as a question burned at his tongue, coming out in a smoky whisper.

"Who are-"

They were gone.

"Dream-" George's voice wobbled, a glass flake plummeting past the ocean winds into the hungry sea.

The memory crumbled to ash around him, leaving him wide-eyed on the desolate boat. Sapnap and the rest of the soldiers had taken to the lower quarters, treating the injured and formulating a hasty plan, he was sure.

Dream stared at George, his eyes trailing over the sleek scales spotting his hips, the glassy blue of the fins spanning across the deck, and the coiling length of that glimmering tail- his *tail* . Images of Schlatt's black tail and horns flickered behind his eyes and Dream recoiled, taking a heavy step away.

"What's wrong, Prince?" Schlatt's mess of dark curls flashed into his view as he peered down at him, his eyes flashing like raw gemstones. "Don't like what you see?"

A fragile sound brought Dream's eyes back to George, who was curled up tight on the wet deck. The last glimpses of the sun shone against his pale skin, dancing across his scales in sparks of gorgeous blue. His doe-like eyes clung to Dream, sending gooseflesh racing down Dream's arms in prickling torrents.

Everything felt wrong.

His hands longed to reach for George, his legs to run up to him and shield him from the wrong in the world. But his head was a mess of sapphire scales and fan-like fins, and his heartstrings were pulled too taut in his chest.

"You're-" The words slid back down his throat and dropped into the pit of his stomach, tumbling in the shock burning within him. George made another pained cry and Dream sharply looked away, his mind reeling with questions and revelations.

George had lied.

Flaming hot shame rushed through him accompanied by a torrent of memories.

The starry-eyed smile of a boy offered a place to stay for the night. The scarlet glow of his cheeks when Dream pulled him close on that horse, the mare carrying them up into the divine heavens. The bubbles of laughter when they danced, the heavy whispers of a treasured secret in the form of a single name, the heat exploding around them as Dream leaned in close, feeling the puffs of breath tickling his cheeks and the legs entwined with his, the curve of George's lips so close to his-

"Can't believe it, can you?" The jeering words tore Dream out of his thoughts and something cold snapped within his chest. Schlatt cocked his head at Dream with heavy amusement weighing down his voice as he continued, "That your little boyfriend is a *monster* like me-"

"No," George gasped, a frail sound in the supernova crashing down around them. "*No*, Dream, I'm nothing like him. Please," He croaked, voice laden with tears filling his throat. "You *know* me-"

"Does he?" Schlatt boomed, his clawed hand tapping idly at his cheek, taunting George. "Or are you just the freak who *lied* to him, so you could escape your poor, sad life?"

Schlatt chuckled at the horror shining with clarity in George's eyes, his searching eyes landing on Dream.

His mind was a whirl.

"What?"

Schlatt hummed, his hooded gaze snaring Dream. "Would you believe me when I say that I was just a humble man, living in peaceful solidarity in my home? Then, this one showed up-" Schlatt jerked his twisting horns to George's crumpled form, the beginnings of a smile forming on his lips.

"Asking me to grant him legs! After a brief conversation, we made a deal. George here had to manage to get a human to kiss him and the transformation would be complete! And *permanent*," Schlatt growled, cutting into Dream's tattered heart with every word. "And guess what? He agreed."

White noise flooded Dream's ears, blurring everything around him as realization crashed into him full force. The painful bullet of shock lodged into his heart melted into a venomous mix of disbelief, hurt, and pure, hot anger.

He was an idiot for believing that it was *luck* that had brought George to him. All the time they had spent together, all their shared moments, and those warm words he had given him- fury boiled over in his stomach, lighting a dark fire within his eyes as he fixed his stare on George.

"Do you understand now, Prince?" Schlatt's deep voice echoed in his head, bouncing off the broken thoughts running through him. "He's done nothing but lie to you, just so that he could have a little fun."

The last word jabbed through his heart and his fingers instinctively curled around the gilded pommel of his sword. Feeling the greedy sinkhole of fear and anger open in his chest, Dream did the only thing he knew.

The sharp wail of his diamond blade sung out in the freezing air as he dragged it out of his sheath, coming to a swift stop in front of his heart.

Past the glimmering smile of the sword, George's shining eyes flew up to his face, the blood draining from his skin as he stared at Dream with unbelievable pain twisting his features.

Furious confusion exploded in Dream's head like fireworks, setting off a point in his jaw that pulsed. How was it that George could look so hurt when he was the one who lied? He had given George his trust too many times to count, and all for what? Yet the boy in front of him looked at him like *he* was the villain.

Schlatt's hulking form moved back as Dream took a heavy step forward. His sword was dead weight strapped to his hand. He barely caught the flash of Schlatt's teeth as the man grinned wide, his red and green eyes trailing Dream's form with hunger.

Salt stung his cheeks sharply and the ocean waves crashed against the boat, sending them swaying

once more. The screech of birds above formed a symphony as the spray of the waves hit them. The weighted thuds of his boots hitting the deck sounded out in the charged notes of death's march. The glimmering facets of his sword winked cruelly as Dream dragged himself forward, a thousand cries thrumming in unity in his ears.

"Dream," George shook, his whole body crumbling in on itself. He set his teary eyes on him and Dream took a shuddering breath at the sight.

The harsh teachings of his father echoed in his ears. The cold hands of expectations clamped down on his shoulders, bringing his sword hand up like he was strung up on marionette strings.

"You lied to me," He whispered, surprised at the level tone of his voice. He sounded dead, he thought numbly. He felt dead.

George looked up at him with a guilty frown, his eyebrows pulled down atop his eyes. "I never meant to-" He caught himself, swallowing thickly as tears dripped down his cheeks, painting them with transparent regret. "It was never meant to be like this. I'm sorry," He sobbed and Dream screwed his eyes shut as his eyes stung sharply with that telltale prickle.

"I'm sorry, George," He whispered before lifting his sword, feeling the weight clamp down on his wrists like some great beast's teeth.

George whimpered and the sound triggered a wave of noise that streamed through the white noise clouding his head.

"You are going to make a brilliant King, I know it," George murmurs close as his fingers leave trails of warmth against his jaw, meeting Dream's eyes with his lovely gaze,

"Dream," His voice changes, shakier now. Dream doesn't like it. "Why are you in the sky?" George giggles and Dream watches in horror as his hands fall limp, leaving his jaw searing cold in the uncertainty of the night.

A wracking sob reaches Dream's ears and he tenses as George's form barrels into him, filling his chest to the brim with golden heat. "You're okay," George whispers to him, and Dream stares down the slope of his nose to the delicate smile perched on George's lips. He can taste the salt of the air on his tongue now, he realizes faintly.

George's eyes, which glimmer with relief and something more, widen as they fix on something behind him. With shocking clarity, he yells, and the perfect world around Dream shatters.

"Watch out!"

And then Dream knows.

The sword clattered to the floor, fractions away from George's hands, which were pressed against the deck in front of him.

He thought he heard Schlatt yell behind him, but the world was ablaze around him.

Dropping to his knees in front of George, Dream pulled his head up to meet George's gaze, searching desperately for the answers he needed.

"It was you." The words tumbled from his lips in a hurried mess, but George's eyes shone with clarity. Dream bolstered on, his head stuffed with the swarming clouds above. "That day on the sea, when I was thrown overboard. Right before the wave hit me I swear I heard something-" He was rambling to himself, he knew, but George was nodding and that was all Dream needed to continue. " *Someone* . I heard someone scream at me from the sea before I fell in and they saved me. I thought I was imagining things, but- but it was you, wasn't it?"

A radiant smile cracked George's tear-streaked face and Dream's mouth parted as he nodded.

"Yeah," George breathed softly, his eyes curved in glimmering crescents.

Words escaped him but his hands were moving on their own, reaching out for George with a clear purpose. His fingers brushed George's icy cheeks, his palms fitting against his skin perfectly.

"God, just when I thought this couldn't get more *pathetic* ," A heavy growl sounded out and Dream watched as George's eyes grew large.

His hand shot to his sword, but George beat him to the punch, shoving Dream to the side with surprising strength as a black blur shot through the space he had occupied.

Dream hit the deck hard. The wind was swiftly knocked from him, what little breath spiraling in his gut shoved out of him as he bounced painfully against the wood. His back smacked against the boat's edge and his eyes rattled in his skull.

A broken cry sounded out and Dream's neck snapped up, blood rushing into his head. Disoriented and sore, it took a second to realize what he was seeing. Then, fury exploded through him.

Schlatt, held up by that massive tail, grinned crookedly, his mismatched set of green and red eyes staring down at his catch.

Dream's eyes fell to the dark wood planks, widening as they took in the startling darkness of blood blossoming on the deck. Dragging his eyes up, he sucked in a harsh breath as his gaze landed on rivulets of crimson running down sapphire scales, dripping down trembling fingers, falling across pale lakes of skin.

George breathed out shakily, his scarlet fingers scrabbling at the clawed hands that bound him around his waist, digging his nails into Schlatt's skin in a futile attempt to get free. Three deep, gouging wounds stretched across George's abdomen with two shallow claw marks scratching his skin a raw pink.

The blood pooled in the cuts and spilled over his front, smudged all over his wandering hands, his glinting scales. Schlatt's arms were hooked around him, one dangerously close to his fluttering stomach.

Sickness raged in Dream's stomach as he watched George writhe, filling his throat with bile.

He'd seen his fair share of blood, he wasn't that sheltered. Hell, he'd experienced life-threatening wounds, much to the chagrin of Sapnap. He had wielded weapons since he took his first steps, he had marched through battlefields with nothing but a mask to cover his fracturing confidence, he had held the bodies of fallen comrades to their last breath, had watched as blood bubbled from their dead lips like shedding rose petals. All of those times, he had pulled his broken self together, keeping his kingdom, his family in mind. Yet somehow, as he watched George bleed through his blurring vision, he felt paralyzed.

A wretched gasp was torn from George's lungs as Schlatt's arms tightened around his waist, painting his skin with a fresh wave of crimson that had Dream's hand flying to his mouth.

"You were too late, King," Schlatt's thunderous voice exclaimed, his lips curled up high.

The horned figure was backed up against the edge of the boat, the ocean raging behind him. The sky cracked open with spiderwebs of lightning, masking the weak shine of the stars above.

Feeling an unexplainable tug, he set his sights back down on the ship, immediately meeting the shine of deep brown eyes. Dream felt his heart stop at George's gaze, feeling his bones melt as George's lips twitched up. It sparked something dangerous in him and that previous fury returned in a wave of overwhelming heat. The leather of his boots scratched against the floor as he picked himself up, ignoring the flashes of pain erupting in his knees.

A loud laugh broke the charged silence hovering heavy like fog, and Dream sharpened his glare for the horned man opposite to him.

Schlatt jerked George in his grip, grasping the attention of both boys.

"This has gone on for too long. Say goodbye, George," Schlatt purred and Dream shot up, his hand going for his sword, only to swipe at air. He cursed breathlessly, realizing in that horrible moment that his diamond blade glittered coolly on the ground in front of George, completely and utterly out of reach.

"Dream-" George cried out, his arms reaching out for Dream.

The rest of his words were lost to the howl of the wind as Schlatt gripped the edge of the boat, flashing Dream a grin before throwing George over the edge, sending the boy plunging into the quavering waves below.

By the time Schlatt looked back, Dream was halfway across the boat, his legs panging with phantom pains as he kicked his sword up from the deck, sending the blade tipping through the air in a full arc.

It landed in his heavy hand, empty and worthless. The reassuring weight turned reckless and angered as he set his eyes on Schlatt.

"Oh, don't look at me like that, Prince! You had your chance." Schlatt purred, his red eye trained on Dream as he turned away, casting eerie shadows across the ship. "Poor little George," He

continued, his tongue dipped in heated silver. "He won't ever get to see the sunset over the seas, he won't ever get his fairy tale ending. Not when I'm done with him."

Boiling heat rushed through Dream's veins, sending a fierce growl ripping through his throat like sharpened blades. He arched his sword hand back, feeling the weight of the diamond blade in his fist. It tipped behind his ear, whispering with cold intent as he set his murderous gaze on the horned figure before him.

Schlatt huffed out a laugh, his back fully turned to Dream as he heaved himself over the edge of the boat, his winding tail curling up behind him.

"Farewell Dre-"

The whistle of his sword cut through Schlatt's words as it shot from Dream's outstretched palm like a lightning bolt hurled from heaven's hand. The blade threw Schlatt's face to the side, firing past the mer into the depths of the sea. The glittering length disappeared instantaneously, but its effects were clear.

The startling splash of blood and the clap of Schlatt's claw against his cut face brought an unexplainable feeling of mirth rushing through him. A maniacal grin broke Dream's face, cracking through the fear and horror coursing through his blood.

Schlatt's sharpened nails danced across his cheek, smearing the red all over his fingers. He set his glowing eyes on Dream, towering over the unarmed prince. His shadow seemed to stretch around him as the darkness pooled around him.

"You'll regret that," He hissed, baring his teeth. Schlatt was a shadow, flitting against the darkness of the sky as he pulled himself overboard, diving into the waters below in the blink of an eye.

"No-" Dream gasped, throwing himself against the railing desperately. The edge of the boat dug into his guts as he pushed himself as far as he could go, peering down into the sea.

The glimmer of green winked back at him as he stared at his distorted reflection, taken aback by the fear-struck boy pleading at him from the ocean waves, begging to know if everything would be alright.

The wave crashed against the boat and Dream's reflection disappeared in a mass of frothy white.

Searching the water for dark scales, crimson pools, gorgeous brown eyes, a broken sound escaped Dream as he scoured.

Nothing remained.

Schlatt was gone, and George was somewhere in the ocean bleeding out, drowning to death, dying without him there. The perfect bait for a killer.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you everyone for waiting for this chapter! Your continuous support has meant the world to me!

This chapter was actually originally 10,000 + words (28 pages), which was getting to be a little crazy even for me, so I decided to split it up and this was the best place to end it as the rest of it is sort of a long continuous story from Gogy's POV

Luckily that means that the last chapter will be up very soon! (Of course, as it's pretty late here and I'm running on crackhead amounts of sleep, that editing will be questionable.)

OH AND AMAZING NOTE: Scarl3tt, a wonderful reader and an incredibly talented person made fanart for this fic! It's awesome and I am so honored beyond words. It's truly beautiful, and I had a blast freaking out over it.

So you can check it out here: <https://imgur.com/a/9ByAzsM>

(They drew Eret, Wilbur, and Gogy the British Boyos and Dream and George's boat scene, which is so cool!)

The next chapter will be up soon, thank you to all who stuck with this fic! <33

Part of Your World

Chapter Summary

"Someone!" George screamed, shoving the cry from the clutches of his throat with all his might. "Please, help me. Help me!" The words bubbled out of his lips in hysterical hiccups, piercing the shallows with his agonized pleas.

"No one is coming George!" Schlatt laughed, pulling him towards the gaping maw of a cave, shrouded in threatening darkness. "You've used up all your lifelines. Who do you think will save you now?"

Chapter Notes

TW: Blood, Descriptions of injury

If you are sensitive to these subjects, please consider your safety and wellbeing before reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George hit the water hard, pain rippling across his back. Sinking through the desolate sea, his tail a flag of shining blue floating above, George spun around, his stomach throbbing in protest. His eyes acclimated to the water as the familiar feel of his tail weighed him down in the water. What should have been comforting filled him with dread as he turned, searching fervently for a glimpse of anything in the shifting blue around him.

A swish of water crested against his skin and he whipped around, a cry of "Dream?" already leaving his lips.

"Sorry," A rumbling voice scoffed and George's blood froze to ice, sending a startling spike of fear ramming into his heart. "Your Prince Charming is rather... preoccupied."

Green and red glinted at him through the cool waters, vibrant and manic, widening above the curling grin winding Schlatt's lips up.

The vibrancy of his stare caught George off guard. He could see the faint greens of kelp swaying on the sandbanks below, but the color was muted and deadened. Similarly, the dull reds of fish

floated by, but the colors didn't hold a candle to the hues flashing in Schlatt's eyes.

"Get away-" George shuddered, salty tears springing to his eyes and pooling into the suffocating seawater surrounding him. "Please, just let me go, I- *please* !" He screamed, feeling his resolve fracture.

Schlatt's scaled arms shot out, latching onto him like a viper claiming its prey. His grip on George's arms was pure steel, his lips twisted like metal bars caging him in. George felt like he was dying- the pain in his chest was magnifying with every passing second as more blood coursed out of the wounds. The water around him was turning an unsettling black, tinged dark with the springy clouds of blood seeping out from his stomach. George was dying.

"None of that, George." The hands on his arms yanked him through the water and George groaned as his wounds twisted, pain sinking its merciless teeth into his abdomen. "You remember the deal, don't you? You work for me now." Schlatt's voice carried his smile, making George's stomach churn.

The ocean was a blur around them, a swarm of twisting hunks of coral stretching over him like elongated fingers reaching for him, ready to pluck him from the familiarity of the water. His found colors of purple reefs, blue currents, orange fish, and yellow sand flew by like afterthoughts in his living nightmare.

"Someone!" George screamed, shoving the cry from the clutches of his throat with all his might. "Please, help me. Help me!" The words bubbled out of his lips in hysterical hiccups, piercing the shallows with his agonized pleas.

"No one is coming George!" Schlatt laughed, pulling him towards the gaping maw of a cave, shrouded in threatening darkness. "You've used up *all* your lifelines. Who do you think will save you now?"

His answer came in the form of a low blare that echoed against the rock walls of the cave, rebounding against the stalactites jutting down over the opening. George spun around in shock, twisting his neck to catch the source of the sound- that incredibly familiar sound.

That low, wailing noise that rumbled through the castle walls every monumental occasion, those conch shells wielded by the royal guards, the comforting swell of the low notes of *home* .

Schlatt's grip tightened around George's arms, but it was too late. A brilliant grin broke out across George's lips as he heard the blare of the conch shell once more, feeling a heady sensation overtake his delirious brain.

The cavalry had arrived.

A spear sliced through the water, missing Schlatt's serpentine tail by mere fractions. George looked up and tears of unadulterated relief flooded his eyes as he watched a familiar figure propel towards him.

A shimmering black tail accented with red splashes and those heart wrenching warm eyes met him as Bad swum forward, barrelling through to him.

A soldier followed him closely, a warning hand placed atop Bad's shoulder, holding him back from Schlatt's barely restrained wrath. The guard's skin glowed warmly in the midst of the ocean, the swoop of his wavy black hair masking narrowed ochre eyes.

Jovial music swelled in George's ears in the form of a dazed memory. Bad, his cheeks pink and his lips twitching into a gentle smile as he was led out onto the dance floor by a gentle hand, a curved grin. Skeppy, his mind supplied him, as he watched the guard hold Bad back.

"Hey! Get *away* from him, you muffin!" Bad yelled, his hands raised at his chest, curled tight into shaking fists.

Schlatt's eyes widened momentarily at the insult, before a confused look struck him, dragging his dark eyebrows low over his blazing eyes.

"Bad-" George called out in warning before a hand shot to his throat, shoving his jaw up to face the gleaming surface. He coughed harshly, squirming as Schlatt's claw tightened around his neck, digging his pointed nails into his paper-thin skin.

"How infuriating," Schlatt growled, his face thunderous as he examined the surge of guards circling them. "All this effort, for you?" George cowered under Schlatt's scrutinous stare, feeling smaller than ever before.

A cluster of lemon-yellow sparks drew George's eyes to two small figures standing close, shielded

behind a row of guards.

Tommy and Tubbo looked nervous, visibly restless from their position behind the armed palace guards. George couldn't help but smile at the two, mouthing a feeble thank you to the two boys. They had saved him.

Too young to be caught in a war, and too young for such pain, George thought with remorse as he watched Tommy clap a supportive hand on Tubbo's bowed shoulder, aiming a strong nod at George. Children should never have been involved.

Unfortunately, George realized as a deep growl hummed through the electric air, he wasn't the only one to notice the appearance of the two boys.

"Tommy, Tubbo. What do you think you're doing?" Schlatt ignored George's writhing as he gripped onto the Prince mercilessly, glaring daggers at the young boys.

A demented laugh erupted from Schlatt's chest as he stalked forward, ignoring the guards as they swung their spears low, brandishing the deadly tips at the horned man.

"Don't tell me," Schlatt flashed them a deranged grin, taking pleasure in the way the boys shivered. "You've been conspiring with those, those idiots. Those tyrants!"

"I don't-" Tubbo stammered, his voice wavering.

"You know what we do to traitors, Tubbo?"

The question hung heavy and sharp in the air, filling George with unrestrained rage. His eyes flitted to Tubbo, whose eyes were blown wide in fear, fixated uncertainly on Tommy, whose eyes were wide in a shell-shocked look.

Schlatt's red eye burned in the dull waters as he stared down at the boys with a death-dealing glare. "Nothing good."

"Schlatt!" The name echoed around the barren shallows, reverberating with earth-shaking anger.

George's eyes widened as shock burst within him, giving way for hope to bloom. He knew that voice- He *knew* that voice, he-

"Step away from my son."

King Philza stared down his glowing trident, his vivid cobalt blue eyes ablaze with the force of the seven seas. His hair was suspended around him in a halo of gold, a radiant crown dripping in emeralds held high atop his head. And he was looking directly at George.

"King Philza," Schlatt spat, malice coating his tongue in a thick poison. "How are you?"

"Let go of him," Philza spoke evenly, but his voice brimmed with a fury that brightened the seas, scaring even the shadows back into their hiding spots. His trident thrummed with growing energy, charging the air with the undeniable prickle of magic.

"No can do, Philza, he's *mine* now. We made a deal," Schlatt grinned, his crescent smile glowing in the water.

"I'm sorry-" George cried, whimpering as Schlatt's nails dug into his skin, piercing the fluttering flesh of his throat.

"What do you want, Schlatt?" Philza asked, his brows pulled low over his blazing blue eyes.

"You know me, Philza! Ever the businessman," He laughed, his fingers tapping against George's neck idly. "You know I love a good deal. And the son of the great Sea King! What a commodity," A dangerous smirk curled into Schlatt's tone, as he set his eyes on the glittering crown nestled in Philza's hair. "Though, I might be willing to make an exchange, for something much better."

A terrible silence overtook the ocean floor as the prospect hung over them, toying with their minds.

"Now, do we have a deal?"

George shook his head, ignoring the pain shooting down his back in paralyzing jolts. "Don't-"

"You're my son," Philza whispered, his face contorted with pain. "I- I can't-"

Schlatt grinned wide, crowing even when faced with hate and death. And at that moment, George knew. Schlatt thought he had won. The arch of his chin, the height of his nose, the curve of his grin too strong to be restrained - Schlatt's confidence would be his downfall.

George caught his father's eyes, watching the careful intelligence glimmer behind Philza's emotion wracked gaze.

Do it .

Philza's jaw set, and George knew he understood.

"Okay, Schlatt. You win." Philza conceded, his trident falling to his side, the prongs dancing over the sand beneath his whirling emerald fins. The guards stood down in synchronized practice, their spears twirling back to their sides. George bit down a frown as he watched Bad cry out, dragged back by Skeppy behind the row of guards. Holding his head high, he swallowed thickly as Schlatt's grip on his neck loosened considerably.

"Hand it over."

Philza glared at the horned mer, but his hand went to the glittering crown atop his head, his thumb swiping over the cool facet of the emerald gems. He lifted the gold and Schlatt inhaled quickly into a growing smile.

Hesitantly moving forward, Philza clutched the crown in his steady grip, meeting George's gaze once more as he stretched his hand out to Schlatt.

George gave his father a concise nod. Philza smiled back, that familiar, loving look that never failed to fill George with unbelievable warmth.

Then, all hell broke loose.

Philza swung his trident up in an almighty swing, the prongs exploding in a supernova of light that engulfed the trio.

"You *bastard* !" Schlatt shrieked, lunging forward blindly, his hands scrabbling for the crown.

His claws collided with the twisted metal of the trident, sending another shockwave coursing through the currents, pushing everyone back from the epicenter.

"George!" He heard Philza exclaim in panic as he was thrown through the water, sliding across the rough ocean floor until he came to a stop on the gravelly sand beneath him.

Philza darted towards his son but had no time to dodge as a black blur slammed into him, sending the King hurtling through the water towards the lightening surface.

Schlatt howled wildly as he clawed for the trident, holding onto the metal with a vice-like grip. His features were caught in a sinister snarl, blotches of heat crawling up his neck to his cheeks. His long tail beating against Philza's emerald scales, Schlatt fought like an animal, a raw sort of anguish haunting his face.

The two fought for the weapon blindly in the rush of water around them, masked by the clouds of bubbles frothing up around them.

George shoved himself up, ignoring the searing pain that shot through his body, leaving him hunched over and breathless. He had to help his father - he had failed their kingdom too many times, he couldn't do it again.

He pushed his body up with shaking arms, cursing through gritted teeth as blood rushed to his head with the overwhelming pain. His head was the sky, stuffed full of cotton clouds, dulling everything around him. Was that blood in the water or the shadows of his broken body? He couldn't tell.

A horrible cry reached George's ears and he looked up frantically, searching wildly through the mass of bubbles masking the fighting figures above.

Glimmering red and jubilant green stared down at the King, a malevolent grin spread wide across

dark cheeks. Philza's eyes were screwed shut, his chest rising and falling heavily, a hand curled around his throat. George's heart squeezed suddenly in his chest as a frail cry escaped his lips. Three pronged tips, sharper than diamond, scratched against Philza's chest, Schlatt's toying fist scraping the weapon against his skin.

Unhinged screams careened through the waters as Schlatt gripped the trident tighter, pulling Philza in further. George's throat was raw with agony, his ears ringing uncontrollably. Horror seeped into his body like ice, shaking his fingers as he watched the prongs dip down into his father's chest. Philza's mouth fell agape in silent agony, his pain lost to the bombs exploding in George's head.

He was going to kill him.

Schlatt was going to kill Philza.

Schlatt was killing his father.

At the last second, Schlatt shoved Philza away, turning the trident's hungry blades to the soldiers charging below. Philza sunk back, wisps of blood trailing from him like smoke rising to the sky as his hand gripped his chest, considerably weakened by the fight.

"This was almost too easy."

With a single swipe of the smoldering trident, the soldiers fell back with choking gasps, their hands scrabbling at their throats in an aberrant attempt to breathe. Pearls of air escaped their blue lips as bright milkeness took over their eyes, obscuring any remaining humanity left in their convulsing forms.

George watched in horror as the soldiers fell to the ground, their skin a murky turquoise cracked with chips of green and blue scales. Zombies of the seas, his brain murmured in a hushed whisper, too scary of a thought to be uttered out loud.

Growing up, Wilbur had called them the Gurglers in his many stories, but most knew them as the Drowned. Stay too late out beyond the protected barriers of the Kingdom and they would show up in packs, moving through the water in silence spare for their perverse breathing. The choking gurgles that infected the calm of the ocean were enough reason to run, as all children were taught to believe growing up. George had never seen a Drowned in the flesh, never staying out late enough into the dangerous nights to spot one up close. Now, as his stomach recoiled at the sight of

mangled water-bloated flesh and bile shot up his throat, he wished it had stayed that way.

They turned to George all at once, as if they shared one brain, one body, one purpose - kill him.

"What, George? I warned you didn't I?" Schlatt's voice boomed, his words echoing around them with a new weight. With the trident, George knew Schlatt would be almost impossible to stop. But he knew he had to try. For his kingdom, family, and friends. For Dream, he thought with startling clarity.

Dream's pale face flashed in his head, a blade scattered by his knees, knocked down onto the solid ground. And before George knew it, he was moving.

"You won't win this, George! Give up before I *kill* you!"

"Shut up!" George screamed, his mouth filled with the hot, thick taste of iron. His eyes tracked over the ocean floor, catching the flash of something bright beckoning to him. His hand shot out to the side, fingers curling around the solid hilt of the heavy object. George felt realization strike him like a bolt of lightning as his eyes danced over the length of sparkling diamond hidden away in the depths of the sea.

Inscribed on the glittering blade was a royal insignia, one that George had seen before on wavering flags that flew high above the castle spires. A jolt hit him as he realized where he'd seen the blade before- gripped tightly in Dream's hand. How it had ended up at the bottom of the sea, George didn't know. But as he lifted it, he saw green eyes reflected in the cool facets of the diamonds.

The thought sent fire curling up his fingers, burning his fingerprints into the frozen hilt of the sword. George caught the flicker of panic hit Schlatt's eyes as he thrust his hand up, a blood-curdling cry bursting from his chest.

The blade swung heavy and true, slashing up through Schlatt's face. It cleaved into his skin with sudden ferocity, snapping his head back as it curved into his eye. George gagged at the feeling, his hands shooting to his chest as Schlatt reeled back with a roar. Schlatt's hand knocked the sword away, but the damage had been done - the diamond had torn into his eye, which flared a beaming, blinding green behind the protective cage of his fingers.

Something popped in George's ears as the world dulled around him. An unexplainable sense of loss hit him hard, leaving a gaping hole in his chest. His eyes blurred painfully as if they were lenses

readjusting to a sudden switch. The faint, barely-there glow of green kelp vanished entirely, tarnishing into burnt yellow and brown. Schlatt's eye snapped into grey, the green simply fading into nothingness. A star exhaling its last breath of life, a drop of rain smattering against the sodden dirt, a whisper lost in the whistle of the wind. Green was just... gone.

Schlatt screeched, hunched over in a murky bubble of growing darkness spewing from his eye into the waters around them.

George wasn't focused on the gruesome sight.

The cool glint of gold caught his eyes as he watched the trident fall from Schlatt's grasp, turning over and over again in the darkness of the water. George flung himself at the sinking weapon, his shaking arm outstretched, closing the short distance between his fingers and the trident.

"Come on," He groaned as his fingers brushed against the metal. His hand clamped onto the spear and a rush of adrenaline hit him. His heart thundered in his ears as he yanked the trident to his chest. The twisting prongs pressed against his collarbone, biting him with the freezing touch of metal, but George could barely feel it through the heat consuming him.

The strong call of power coursed through his veins, electrifying his blood. His hands trembled with the trident's magic, feeling overwhelmed and disoriented. How did Philza manage to contain it? The shimmering purple of the trident's magic crept into his brain, filling his mind with the incessant whispers of possibilities.

A yell brought his attention to the hulking figure before him and George swung the trident down low at Schlatt's chest.

The diamond sword was lying dejectedly on the sand below, dark clouds of blood clinging close to the sparkling blade. The horned figure bared his teeth, his breath hissing out from lips pressed close together.

"You're going to regret that," Schlatt breathed, his nostrils flaring.

His hand hovered over his eye, barely visible through the veil of black blood. Furious red burned in his remaining eye, threatening to consume George in its intensity.

"So, *so* much."

A black whip cracked into George's body, sudden and violent, and he gasped as the water blurred around him. Schlatt's tail slammed into him like a bat, sending him tumbling upwards in a flash of blue scales. He could barely muster enough strength to keep a firm hold on the trident as pain erupted from the contact.

George flew through the thick water, pushed back skywards. The currents swept him in their tight embrace, billowing around him as he shot up, up, up, hugging the trident close to him. His ears swelled with the call of the surface and his limbs wavered in the tug of the water, leaving him disoriented.

He could see shadows brimming beneath him, stretching their grisly arms up to his legs, curling around his ankles with malicious intent. The glinting white eyes of the Drowned flashed at him from the depths as they slowly dragged themselves up from the sandbanks. Two horns emerged from the dark below and shot to him.

George squeezed his eyes shut, knowing this was it.

I'm sorry Bad, I'm sorry Eret, I'm sorry Wil, I'm sorry Phil, I'm sorry Dream, I'm sorry I couldn't protect you. I'm sorry I failed.

Warmth engulfed him from behind, like feathered wings shielding him from the shadows below. George let out a shuddering breath as his back collided against a wall of billowing fabric, the strange yellow flowing around him like sheets of silk.

Two arms wound around his waist and the flutter of feet kicking behind his knees brushed against his curling tail. George's eyes shot open at the familiar feeling, turning his head slowly, his thought speeding by too quickly to grasp.

The grip of warm hands on his arms, hands on his hips, hands curling around his chest and heaving him through the water. The murky surface above glinting like fractured glass shards. A pale circular face grinned at him from where it hung against hips, connected to legs that tore through the waters to get them to the safety of the forest. Grey eyes flooded with worry as vile acid pooled in his lungs, coughed up wetly on the fanned leaves of the forest floor. Dream's arms holding him tight as he ran through the woods, a smiling moon winking from above.

Dream's face looked back at him, his eyes trained upwards as his golden-brown hair floated in an ethereal halo around his head. His arm, held around George's ribs, pulled him up roughly, grounding George in the endless water around them. Dream's hand stretched high above, his fingers breaking the surface of the sea and pulling him into the world above.

Wind sliced his cheeks open and George gasped in the sharpness of the night, his hand shooting out to latch onto anything - any lifeline he could grasp in the roll of the sea.

"Hey." A hand gripped his tight, leading his trembling body. The length of the trident was pressed against George's chest, his hand clenched so tight around the handle he was sure he could never let go.

"George," They gasped again and George lifted his chin up, breaking down in the fragile moonlight.

Dream looked down at him, illuminated softly by the gracious glow of the moon. One arm wound tightly around George's waist, Dream's other hand was trailing down his cheek, scooping tears from his face like he was plucking wet gems from the cracking earth.

George's eyes flew over Dream's pale jaw, the slope of his nose, his cheeks darkened with a rosy flush he couldn't quite see. And those eyes. Dream's fiery gaze sucked him in, burning his cheeks, melting his heart, leaving him completely and utterly breathless.

"You're okay," Dream spoke, somehow in both realization and reassurance.

A hysterical laugh bubbled up in George's throat and he nodded, his hand cupped Dream's face, his thumb smoothing the skin of his forehead, the dent between his brows.

"Come on," Dream spoke, clearing his throat as he gripped George's free hand. "We have to get to the boat, Schlatt is-"

" *Furious* ," A chilling growl struck them and George whirled around, gripping the trident in trembling hands.

"Schlatt?" George called as Dream shouted, "Stay back!"

The trident thrummed in George's hands, emitting a shifting glow of shimmering indigo as it swelled with hidden strength. The water seemed to react around him. The waves quelled and the sea winds stalled, everything coming to a stop in a flash. The entire ocean seemed to breathe in anticipation, watching with careful eyes as George faced the horned figure before him.

Blood ran down Schlatt's face from his dull eye, painting his cheek and lips in a gruesome portrait. His red eye flickered dangerously, an unhinged flame ready to set the world ablaze. With the sun fighting to break the horizon behind him, Schlatt was cloaked in darkness, his horns casting winding shadows down on the water between George.

"All of you fools, you *mortals* , are beneath me." Schlatt spat, his hands curling into fists in front of his twisted mouth. "You wanted to be a hero, George? Good. You'll die as one." Schlatt lunged forward with the words, his clawed hands stretched out for George's heart.

"Wrong!" George screamed, the hum of the weapon in his hand almost too much to bear. It called to him, chanting in his brain, set it free, set it loose, use it, use all of it, kill, *kill* -

He plunged the gilded trident into the water, gasping as the shifting blue waves spun into woven sheets of sparkling gold. Dream's hand clamped down on his shoulder as the ocean acknowledged his call, coming to life around him. The water surged up, smashing into Schlatt in an unbelievable wall of gold.

Something deep in the sea beckoned to George, sparks flying up his fingers as the trident's prongs dipped down into the water. It was as though his brain was wired to the water. Everywhere the water was, he was there. Everything the water held, he could command. The feeling was dizzying, but the tight grip on his shoulder held him down, clearing the edges of his fuzzy vision.

Following his instincts, George pulled the weapon up, forcing a spray of seawater into the air. Almost immediately, the shining length of a blade pierced through the water, flipping through the air. He realized with a gasp that it was Dream's sword, long since forgotten on the ocean floor.

George could sense Schlatt's presence in the water, tearing through the water. His eyes leaped to the sword, which arched through the air before it pointed down, beginning its sharp descent into the sea.

"Dream!" George yelled, but Dream was already surging through the water, his hand outstretched for the weapon.

The trident flared in his grip and George plunged the head forward, both of his hands flying to the handle to steady the weapon.

A rolling wave carried Dream further, lifting him above the sparkling cerulean waves into the indigo sky and pushing his feet up on pedestals of the sea. A breath passed, and George watched Dream leap for the sword, his shadowed silhouette a ghost in the night. The moon illuminated him as his hand swung through the air, clashing onto the sword securely.

George's breath left him in a rush as Dream dove into the water, the trident's whispers assuring him he was fine.

"George-" Dream gasped, his free arm clinging to George's waist in a desperate hold.

"Schlatt!" George yelled, his voice shaking the ocean floor. "Show yourself."

The trident glowed, reflecting in George's dark eyes until his gaze was molten. The water shone a startling gold, forming a path.

At the end of the golden swarm, Schlatt stared up at them, sodden and wide-eyed in the face of the two princes. Anger flashed across his visage and he bared his teeth, the moonlight catching his grimace in a brief second before something fragile crashed through the snarl. He turned his neck to the side, but George was there, brandishing his trident at Schlatt before the other could even consider escape.

"Give up, Schlatt," George spat, venom coating his words. "You're done, you hear me? It's over for you."

Dream's hand curled in his and George squeezed back, feeling his heart jump in his chest. His head was too heavy and his arm shook with the weight of the trident, but he held his ground, looking down his nose with as much spite as he could muster.

Schlatt looked down, his warped horns dipping down, almost brushing the water. He breathed out, his shoulders squared, and George tensed, his fingers on the trident tightening until it was almost painful.

The mer looked up and George sucked in a sharp breath as he saw the telltale shimmer coating his eye.

"Please, don't-" Schlatt shuddered, his voice breaking with the weight of tears heavy in his throat.

George blinked, his brows pulling low down over narrowed eyes as he set his gaze on the trembling mer in front of him. *What? Why did he look...*

Schlatt peered up at him with his one eye, a shining, wet red. "Please, George, you don't understand," He gasped, wincing as Dream scoffed. "I- I can't go back to that cave," Schlatt murmured, his clawed hands scratching into his shoulders, leaving his skin raw and bare.

"Schlatt-" George started, his hand dipping low, letting the trident bob against the sea.

" *Please* !" He screamed, words dissolving into a mess of cries. "Have you any idea? Not being able to see in the ocean-" Schlatt collected himself, his tone thick, his eyes filled with deep loathing. "Being blind in the sea is a death sentence. The only way I could survive was if I locked myself in a cave, living on the brink of starvation. God, the *loneliness* ," His voice cracked painfully, and Schlatt tore his gaze away in shame, dread dripping from his tongue. "I *forced* Tommy and Tubbo to obey me. I made them think I was strong, a leader they could depend on. God, what a joke," He laughed, but there was no humor in the sound.

"George," Dream spoke quietly, though his eyes blazed with angered disbelief as they trailed over Schlatt as if he expected Schlatt to lunge at them. "You cannot be falling for this."

"I-" George's throat was filled with lead, his heart a thundering mess in his chest. Dream's hand tightened around his and he swallowed thickly. Setting his shoulders, he lifted the trident. "Schlatt-"

"Do it," The mer gasped, a smile cracking his lips as tears slipped over the indents of his cheeks. "Do it now, kill me." He laughed, a wheezing, hopeless thing. "Kill me, George. Save me, please. Don't you see? He wants you to-" Schlatt jerked his head towards Dream, who frowned, his lips twisting in something George couldn't read. "They all want you to," Schlatt grinned, pulling his arms to his sides, dropping his head down.

"Schlatt-"

" *George* . If I can't see," Schlatt ground out, his teeth still squeezed into a grim, clattering smile. "Then I don't want to be alive."

His heart thundering in his chest, George raised his arm. Dream's hand fell from his grip and George turned to him, biting his lip at the conflicted grimace the other held. He turned his gaze to Schlatt, who watched him with wet jewels brimming in his eyes.

"Thank you," Schlatt smiled, closing his flaming eye. His twisting horns fell as he ducked his head, feeding the ocean with the thick remorse that dripped from his nose.

George swallowed thickly, closing his eyes as he brandished the trident. The wind blew quietly over them, winding the smell of salt and iron around them. George's eyes flicked down to the trident in his grasp, frowning as he waited for the sea to come to life at his fingertips.

Yet nothing happened.

The metal in his arm was dead, the hum of magic silenced by the truth, George thought.

Looking at the trembling mer in front of him, it was hard to picture Schlatt as the villain.

In the stories Wilbur used to spin, the Villain never begged for mercy, they never *cried* . Villains were supposed to be evil and cruel, to the very end. They didn't have feelings, they didn't experience sadness, or fear, or loneliness. He knew Schlatt was the bad guy. So why didn't he feel like one?

"George?" Dream spoke softly, and George shook his head, the trident falling lame at his side as a growing realization sprouted in his mind.

He didn't want to kill Schlatt.

"Leave."

Schlatt jerked his head up at the command, his crimson eye tracking George's face with wild confusion.

"What?" The mer shuddered, the word falling from his blood-stained lips breathlessly.

"Leave, Schlatt, and never come back." George raised his head, giving him a firm nod.

A frown cleaved down Schlatt's face as he shook his head, mumbling, "No, no, no, I- I can't live any longer without sight George, just kill me, I-"

"I'm not killing you, Schlatt," George spoke shakily. Warmth sprung up to his fingers and down his back as Dream clasped his hand once more, entwining their fingers together in a tight grip. "And I'm not taking your sight back either."

Schlatt's jaw fell open, confusion flashing across his face like a strike from a whip. His eye scrutinized George, narrowed in suspicion, but the careful expression dropped in the silence that followed.

George looked away, keeping his eyes trained on the horizon. He watched the fluffy wisps of clouds highlighted with hues of orange in the steadily dawning day. Specks of stars flicked across the brightening sky like freckles on a fresh-faced child, beckoning in the rise of a new day, and along with it, the rise of a new ruler.

"Why?" Schlatt was

"You're not the Villain here, Schlatt," George sighed, looking to Dream. "None of us are."

The prince - *King* now, George realized - returned his gaze. His face was weary and worn, dark circles evident under his eyes, a little more blue than purple George noted faintly. A dark streak that may have been blood marred his cheek, but George was more focused on the growing smile peeking out at him from under the cut.

Dream drew his hand up to his chest, bringing George's palm to rest on his heart. Under the cloak of vivid yellow he wore, George could feel the light dance of Dream's heart fluttering beneath his fingers.

His eyes flickered up, catching Dream's gaze in a dizzying moment. Green was gone, George

knew, and his chest ached at the thought that he'd never really see Dream's eyes. The thought disappeared almost as quickly as it had come, however.

As the sun rose steadily over them, painting them in the first rays of light, George realized with a wide-eyed smile that Dream was a beautiful, breathtaking gold.

Dream's lips quirked back at him, and George couldn't stop his eyes from trailing over his smile. A hand curled under his chin, raising his eyes to Dream's liquid gold gaze.

A single breath passed, and then they were falling into each other, lips crashing together like waves hugging the shore, stealing the breath from George's lungs.

It was like the final puzzle piece slotting into its spot, like the secret whisper of words spoken in the dead of night, like the first snowflake of Winter spiraling down onto soft pink lips.

George couldn't feel anything but Dream, his hand trailing across the small of his back, leaving blossoms of heat blooming across his burning skin. His fingers slid into Dream's hair, falling slowly through sandy brown locks. A gasp escaped his lips as Dream's hand pressed him in close, his body curving towards him like planets pulled into each other's orbits.

His heart was squeezed so tight in his chest he had to be dying. The kiss was softer than anything he'd felt before, like the blushing petals of a newborn rose or the breath of an angel fanning across marble cheeks. Fireworks exploded in his stomach, filling him with sparks and colors, melting him from the inside out.

Frigid air filled his fiery lungs as they parted and George stole as much of it as he could away from the sky. His eyes were weighed down by pleasant warmth, his heart drumming in his chest. Dream held him close, dropping his head to his shoulder. A shuddering sigh left George grinning as Dream's frozen nose nestled into his neck, his arms twining around George's waist.

Catching his breath in the break of the day, George laughed, loud and high in the middle of the golden sea. He could feel the curve of Dream's lips against his neck as they clung to each other, red-faced and gulping the salty air down, failing to quell their singing hearts.

George looked back out at the sparkling sea, heat coiling around him in the still waters.

Schlatt was gone.

...

George watched with bright eyes as Tommy and Tubbo spoke with Wilbur animatedly, bouncing with energy in the cerulean shallows. Wilbur groaned, trying to hide behind Eret's frame, who laughed deep and mirthful, entertaining the two younger boys as Wilbur hushedly cursed them.

Sapnap and Skeppy stayed by the shore, exchanging war stories with equal energy as Bad watched with amusement, hanging onto Skeppy's arm tightly as the other gesticulated wildly.

The summery wind made its journey down to the beach, wrapping around them briefly before it made its departure once more.

George breathed in the crisp air, letting it balloon in his lungs until he thought his chest might burst. Sitting atop a wide rock, his sapphire scales draped over the side, he watched his family as they laughed, the first real sounds of joy he had heard in a while. Snowy white bandages hugged his chest tight, a grim reminder of the night before.

After Schlatt's retreat, Dream had dragged George onto a small rowing boat - the one that, George found out, he had used to boat out and find him. By some small miracle, George had held onto the trident, using what little strength he had left to flip it safely into the boat.

He found out later from Philza that the Drowned soldiers had all reverted back to mer as soon as the sun's rays broke the night, leaving many of the guards with splitting headaches and no recollection of the events.

Dream and George had stayed in that rowboat, huddled close under the flame of a small iron lantern with Dream doing his best to tend to the wounds stretching across George's stomach. How he didn't bleed out, George didn't know. He had been convinced that the ocean was a mottled purple from his blood, but Dream told him through a mess of wheezing laughter that he was overreacting.

His eyes had never really left George's tail, though.

Not even after the countless kisses they shared in the boat, desperate and running on adrenaline and relief. The memories sent a rush of heat to George's cheeks and he shook the thoughts away with a sheepish smile.

"Hey Gogy," A familiar voice called out, husky from laughter, and George scoffed as he turned with a brow already raised.

"Not you too," He groaned, but a grin twitched on his lips as Dream scaled the rock, sitting down with his legs dangling out over the water. "Sapnap's getting to you."

Dream shook his head with a small wheeze. "Sapnap corrupted me a long time ago, George."

"And you love it!" Sapnap called out to them in his brash voice from where he lay on the beach, a roguish smirk clear on his face.

Dream shook his head good-naturedly before looking back at George. His eyes fell to the shimmering tail dipping into the clear waters below and George watched with pained eyes as his smile faltered.

King Philza, however hard he tried with the trident, hadn't been able to grant him legs. Convincing his family to let him change in the first place hadn't gone over particularly well, with Wilbur and Eret denying him vehemently. Surprisingly, it was Philza who had shifted the argument. His father had taken him aside, and with a heavy heart and a watery smile, had told him that he knew what George wanted.

"How could I ever claim to be a good father to you if I didn't give you room to fly?" Philza had uttered thickly, a hand cupped on George's cheek. "I need to set you free."

But it could never be that simple. The type of magic required to change forms was too ancient, long since lost to the tenacity of time. And George knew this, but the truth was hard to swallow. Dream knew it too but hadn't spoken of it. He was pretending like it didn't hurt, which made it all the more painful, George thought.

"You'll come visit?" Dream whispered, his lip caught between his teeth, his eyes pure as freshly

fallen snow.

George smiled softly, shoving down the growing ache in his chest as he lifted a hand to brush against the curve of Dream's cheek. He trailed his thumb down the King's lips, softer than the fluff of the clouds hanging over them.

"Of course," He whispered, and Dream nodded, leaning forward against George as the chatter of their friends came to a slow halt around them. It was time, George thought sullenly, knocking his forehead against Dream's.

They had been reunited with their families, they had sent Schlatt away, they had survived the night - it was the best outcome. Logically, it truly was. So why did his world feel like it was a snowflake plunging into the Summer sun, whispering its last wishes? His whole heart was fracturing, and he didn't think it would ever get better.

"Um, sorry gentlemen - this is a little awkward, um, Big G?"

He couldn't help the exasperated smile that spread across his lips.

"Yes, Tommy?" George called, giving Dream an apologetic look while the young boy swam up to the rock, gripping something in his hand.

"I think you're going to want to take a look at this..." Tommy trailed off, lifting his hand up to George. A round glass bottle with a longer neck sat in his palm, a cork holding the shifting liquid securely inside. The liquid was a myriad of blue tones, ever-shifting like the sea's colors. It sparkled demurely, winking at George with a mysterious charm. The bottle was labeled with a simple message scrawled onto a small tag, written in scratchy letters.

Thank you .

"Oh, Schlatt," George murmured, taking the bottle carefully from Tommy's outstretched hand. Turning it over in his palms, he looked for any additional information, but there was none. Just those two words, looking up at him in earnest.

"It was floating towards us," Tubbo supplied, tugging anxiously on a lock of his fluffy brown hair. "We didn't see anyone in the area, but... I think we all know who it's from."

"George," A warning voice uttered low, paired with Dream's distrustful eyes. "This is Schlatt we're talking about. I know we let him go, but-" He cut himself off, his worried gaze flickering to the blue potion. "I don't know..."

George inhaled slowly, cradling the bottle in his shaking hands. Flashbacks of the day before hit him roughly, creating a torrent of memories that surged through his head. Schlatt's tear-soaked grin as he told him to kill him echoed through him.

He felt a heavy gaze on him and turned to meet King Philza's eyes, a bright cobalt blue against the pale sky. Philza held his eyes for a moment before he nodded once, his lips curved up as he met Dream's eyes.

"Take care of him for us," Philza spoke softly, but the winds carried his voice high. Dream gave him a firm nod, placing a hand on his chest in a silent promise. Philza smiled in approval before jerking his head at George.

An elated smile broke George's worries as he handed the bottle to Dream. Slipping into the water, he swam to Philza in a flash, throwing his arms around his father tightly. Philza hugged him back, his grip gentle around his bandages, but filled with fierce love. Wilbur and Eret joined the hug, encompassing the family for a long, heart-wrenching moment.

Wiping tears from his eyes, George looked back at Dream. The potion was slipped into his trembling hands and he uncorked the bottle, lifting the brew to his lips. In one go, he downed the sweet liquid, closing his eyes as it ran down his throat.

King Philza brought his trident up, waving it through the air in a fell swoop as George clung to Dream, watching as sapphire scales shifted to skin. The promising weight of silver appeared on George's forehead as a crown materialized in his hair, dripping blue jewels down his countenance. Cloth wrapped around him, courtesy of the King's magic, and George watched with bated breath as the water around him spun to blue and silver robes, cloaking him in regality.

Dream slid off the rock, splashing beside him into the water, and George couldn't help but laugh as he threw his arms around George, hugging him tight in the shallows.

"It worked," Dream gasped, beaming as he cupped George's cheeks in his hands, knocking his legs against his in the water.

"I do not know what Schlatt had to sacrifice to make that potion," Philza muttered, shaking his head with some semblance of sympathy crossing his face.

"What do you mean?"

"That sort of magic doesn't just come from nowhere. All creation requires destruction. In order to brew something of that level, he'd have to suffer large losses."

The words hung heavy in the air, no one sure of what to say.

George looked out towards the still seas, to the colorful ocean floors, filled with the bursting colors of coral blooming from the sand. If he looked hard enough, he wondered if he would see a horned shadow peering back up at him.

Warm hands on his face brought him back to the present and he looked up at Dream, his eyes filled with the vibrant yellow of his cape.

His heart swelled with all the unsaid. He had spent his whole life searching, trying to fill this inexplicable hole in his chest. Looking at the boy in front of him, George had never felt more complete.

"Hey," Dream whispered close, his voice brimming with fervid emotion.

"Hi," George laughed breathlessly, his hands bunched up in Dream's cloak.

Blue and Gold in the strong sun and surrounded by everyone he loves, George had never felt more at home.

...

End

Chapter End Notes

Hello everyone!

DOUBLE UPDATE BABYYYYY - completely unheard of I know :')

We made it! I still cannot believe this is over, it's truly been an amazing time writing this. Thank you to everyone who read this and came along with me on this crazy story. I really hope you all enjoyed!

A final thank you to my best friend and beta, who kept me afloat through rough days and spurred me on. Clove, you are such a sweetheart and I love you so much! She has an SBI SCP AU that's currently updating every Tuesday, so go check that out right here if you're interested (I highly recommend :D)

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/27327709/chapters/66767797>

I'm sure I'll be writing more MCYT fics, so this isn't the last you'll see of me :) I love reading everyone's comments and I hope to see you all again soon! Until then, stay safe and have a great day/night! <3

End Notes

To all my friends who will inevitably read this and judge me: I have no excuses.

I have fallen down the black hole of simping for block men, it is true.

Join me or perish :D

Thanks to my best bud, the lovely C_l_o_v_e for beta-ing this complete mess of indulgence. Thank you also for not judging me based on my horrible grammar. Shower her with love please, she's the best!

Also: If you were wondering why George isn't colorblind, don't worry, that's on purpose! And also I messed around with all their ages because I wanted George to be the youngest Prince, but they're all over 18.

also important to note I'm shipping characters and personas here, not the actual boys. If Dream, George, or anyone mentioned in this fic expresses discomfort or unhappiness at any of this, the work will be taken down immediately, no questions asked.

Thanks for reading! I'll try to update soon but it all really depends on how badly my school

wants to witness my downfall.

Ly all <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!